HM

THE HARD MUSIC MAGAZINE

Anberlin
Norma Jean
The Showdown
The Becoming
H.I.M.
Special Fashion Feature
The Wedding
Special Double Flip Cover

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September, October 2008 • *Issue #133*
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TWO GREAT BANDS, TWO BROTHERS, TWO TERRIFIC DRUMMERS... ONE CHOICE FOR MICROPHONES: AUDIX

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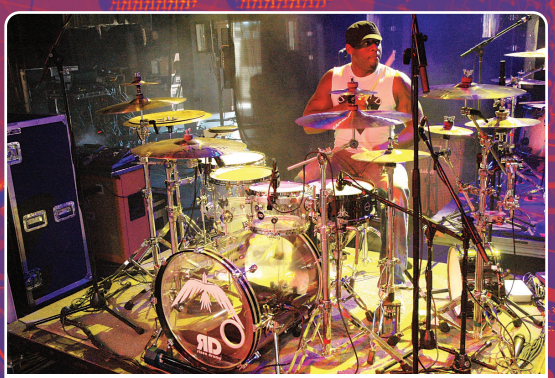
PILLAR

BRANDON ESTELLE
SUPERCHICK



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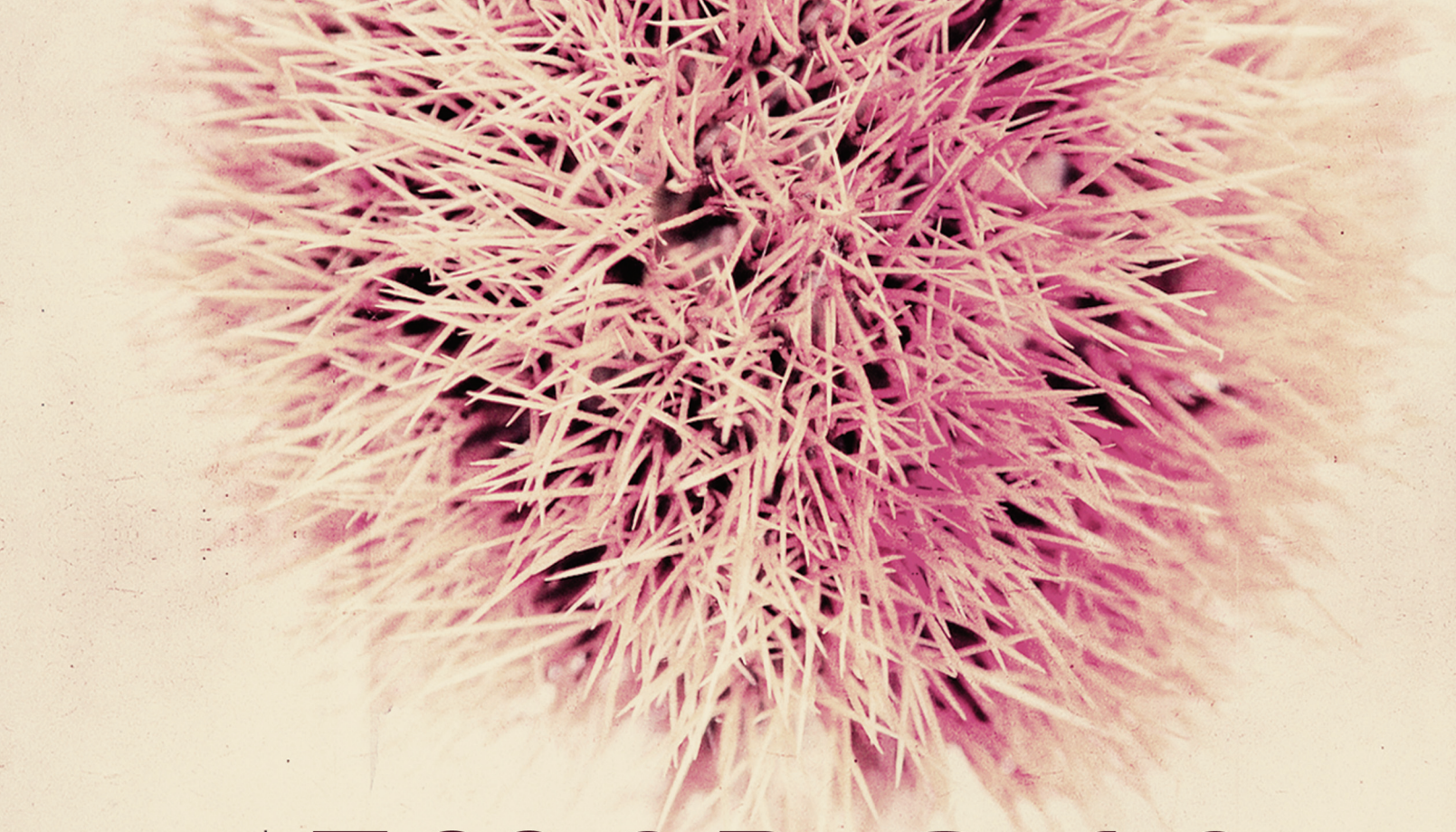

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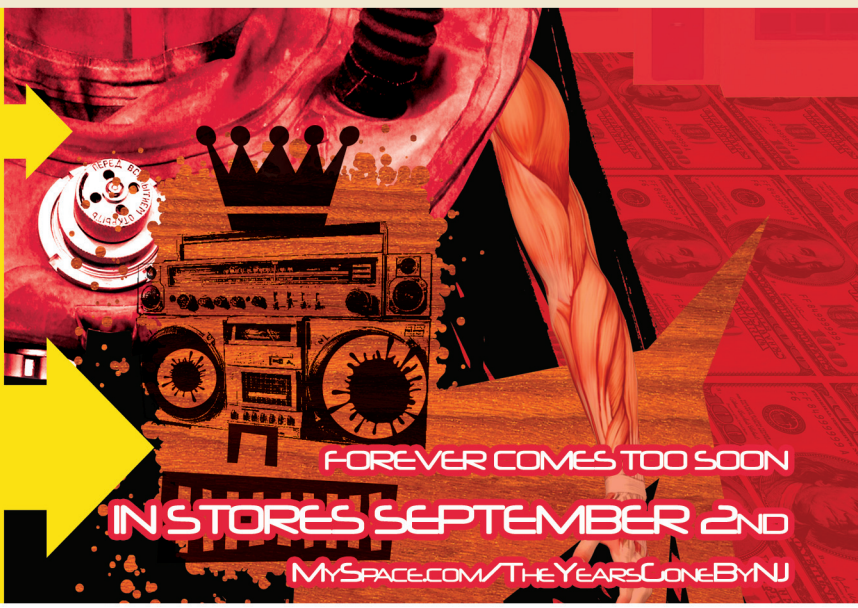

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BRAVENEWWORLD

From the editor

Doug Van Pelt

I LIKE KRYSTAL MEYERS!
In fact, I would consider her a friend. I'd do anything for her. I want to support her career in any way I can. Besides that, I like her as a person. When we've chatted, we've gotten along great, admiring many of the same artists. So, it is with great trepidation that we ran the soon-to-be-controversial album review in this issue. Now, I don't know if it will truly be controversial. It might be vehemently hated, might not. If it does cause a fuss, I'm sorry. I had to weigh the consideration of her well-being with that of our writer, The Kern County Kid. I'd be lying if I said this writer wasn't practically out of control, but I really like to grant our writers a lot of creative freedom. When I critiqued this review for *Make Some Noise* (a pretty darn cool rhythmic rock album), I asked myself: 'Is the review vulgar?' No. The writer uses a questionable phrase with the word "hell" in it, but I hardly think that's vulgar. 'Does it include destructive criticism (as opposed to the constructive kind)?' No. 'Does it put the artist in an unnecessary negative light?' No, I don't think so. The writer pre-judged the album at first; got past that and "field-tested" the album in a dance club, where it was a hit. Now, I can see how the vibe of the review might rub some the wrong way; however, I think it's good to run in these pages. Disagree? Use our message boards at hmforums.com and let your voice be heard!

I am thrilled to have some awesome bands in this issue. I mean, check out the line-up: The Showdown, Norma Jean, Underoath, Anberlin! Wow. It was also a thrill to interview one of my favorite "secular" bands, H.I.M. It was funny to see my best-laid plans fail, though. I sure thought I had the perfect starter question for the interview. While it didn't completely fall flat on its question mark, it didn't spark the kind of lively debate or discussion I thought it would. Nevertheless, I think you'll agree that this is another interesting read in the long line of "What So & So Says" articles.

Please start following us on twitter.com (!) It's a fun, new social networking site that fills in little inconsequential details of your day, answering the question: "What are you doing?" The twitters at Cornerstone, for instance, posted some fun remarks about the concerts they were seeing (and posting with their mobile devices in real-time). Follow me at twitter.com/dooglar

SPINNING AT HM NOW

ANBERLIN	*New Surrender*	Like *Cities Part 2*, but I think that's a good thing!
JON FOREMAN	*Spring and Summer*	The song "Instead of a Show" is AMAZING!
HEAD	*Save Me From Myself*	Mighty groovin' with heavy, dark sounds.
SAM PHILLIPS	*Don't Do Anything*	Brilliant, witty, sad and beautiful.
AUS. DEATH MACH.	*Total Brutal*	Incredibly fun spoof of Arnold Schwarzenegger.
VARIOUS ARTISTS	*In The Name Of Love*	Super chill and groovin' U2 covers African style.
KANSAS	*Two For The Show*	Does prog rock get better? A re-issue done right.

REGULAR

Letters 80
Hard news 10
Live reports 13
Declaration of independents 22

FEATURETTE

Bon voyage 16
The classic crime 18
Superchick 20
The wedding 77
Take it back 75

FEATURE

The becoming 26
Krystal meyers 28
Norma jean 30
The showdown 34
Underoath 36
Norma jean poster 44
Anberlin 55
Brian "head" welch 57
H.I.M. says 72

INTERMISSION

Live photography 59
Columns 63

REVIEW

Music 23
Indie pick 61
DVD, book, & gadgets 65

HARDNEWS
Quick & concise

DAVID CROWDER BAND
THE REMEDY CLUB TOUR CD/DVD

The band's first ever full-length DVD (shot with nine cameras in two cities) features five-and-a-half hours of content, 5.1 surround sound, a behind-the-scenes tour documentary, song demonstrations hosted by each member of the Crowder band and chord/lyric subtitles in addition to 16 songs recorded live on last fall's best-selling tour. "This tour was so amazing for us," says David Crowder. "Many of our beliefs converged regarding music's role in the church and the unexpected spaces our faith can function in. We believe that there is no space that is not sacred, that every second is lived in the very presence of God, and we wanted people to experience this reality, which led us to transporting these songs into places perhaps unexpected. The response was fantastic. To be in these historic rock-and-roll venues and watch the story of God come alive night after night was unbelievable."

RELIENT K
RELEASE 26-SONG EP

Relient K typically releases an EP between studio albums, but they've outdone themselves with *The Bird and the Bee Sides*. It's got 26 songs (including 13 brand new ones) and a running time of 70 minutes. "We were just trying to think of what our fans would want from a b-sides record," explains lead singer/guitarist/pianist **Matt Thiessen**. "We're like, they probably just want everything – so let's try to give it to them." Along the way, the band decided to include some new tracks, a concept that quickly morphed into, "Hey, why doesn't everybody in the band write a song?" Thus the EP begins with a baker's dozen of original new tunes collected under the moniker of *The Nashville Tennis* EP. With all five members writing and taking turns on lead vocals, it's perhaps Relient K's most diverse effort to date.

I Am Ghost Head Back Into Studio

Slated for release this fall, the quintet recently headed east to record the follow up to 2006's critically heralded debut, *Lovers' Requiem*, with producer Paul Leavitt (Senses Fail, The Bled, Circa Survive) in Baltimore, MD. After a lineup change in 2007, I Am Ghost found solidarity by returning to their roots and rediscovering their passion for the music. "We went through a spiritual journey these past six months," explains founder and singer Steve Juliano. "Call it a band cliché, but it doesn't really bother me to say that. I sat in my room with these songs and really just let everything out. It was a cleansing of all the bad thoughts and ideals that had stuck in my head for almost three years. The past will always haunt you, and I know this. For awhile I was a very angry pissed off guy who hated a lot of people. This new album made me think. 'Why was I letting other people take control of my life?' This album saved my life more than once. I don't know where I would be without these songs, the new members of this band and my family. Lyrically this is the darkest album I have ever written. Musically it's the most beautiful music we have ever done."

News bullets

I Am Terrified, Gotee's newest metal core band, are now unveiling their six-song EP, followed by a launch tour. In addition to touring, the band will be shooting a new music video for the song "Falling On Everlasting" and one additional video. The current music video for "Heaven Knocking" has already cracked the Top 10 video play list on TVU.

The Devil Wears Prada had a chance to premiere its new video for "HTML Rulez Dood" on *Headbangers Ball* this summer. The video was produced by Endeavor Media (who did the killer HM spots circulating around the internet). The band has also just announced their signing to Ferret Music with a new album expected next year. The Devil Wears Prada have returned from a headlining run of the UK and a slot of the prestigious Download Festival. They plan to begin recording a new album at the end of the year for a 2009 release.

Family Force 5 releases its sophomore album *Dance Or Die*, on August 19. This release is a strategic partnership between the Transparent Media Group founded by **the Olds brothers**, manager Chris Woltman and producer Joe Baldridge with EMI Music Marketing and Tooth & Nail Records. "EMI has been involved with Family Force 5 since the beginning," says Bill Gagnon, Senior Vice President of EMI Music. "The really interesting part of the story is that we recorded *Dance Or Die* totally independently, paying for all of the studio time, meals and lodging by ourselves with the whole DIY mentality," notes guitarist **Derek "Chap Stique" Mount**. It didn't take long for music industry executives to catch wind of this, and before they had even finished recording the band was fielding label offers, finding a new home with EMI Music Marketing and Tooth & Nail Records.

All four members of **Pillar** recently taught classes at Camp Electric, in Nashville, TN. Students of the guys in Pillar were privileged to insights about just what it takes to make it in the music industry, and received specific instruction on the role each member plays in the band. Thanks to the folks at the sold-out event, each camper received a free copy of HM Magazine.

Photo: Jamie Pearson

Nevertheless

BY BRAD MOIST

Let's be honest, there are some things out there nowadays that do make it easier for bands than 10 years ago. MySpace bulletins, Twitter updates, and text messaging make it a lot easier to let your fan base know about your shows. But there are a few things that make it a lot tougher. Nowadays, you might not be able to even make it to the show due to rising gas prices. Especially when headliners and venues still only want to shell out $100 for opening bands or nothing at all. And if you are in a band, then you know $100 for your van towing a trailer will barely get you out of your hometown. "Gas prices are killing everyone, and most people would probably choose food and shelter over entertainment," states Nevertheless lead singer Joshua Pearson. "Money is not easy to come by in this business. Touring is not cheap, and, being in the state of where the economy is, it is difficult to make a lot of money playing music for a living," says guitarist AJ Cheek. "Creating a teleportation device would be in the best interest of touring bands," jokes Joshua. It is true, today's economy is tougher on bands and unfortunately most bands just don't have the smarts to survive.

"Save money where you can" says AJ. "Lately we have really been trying to cut down on some things. We always try to eat at the venue, if they are providing lunch or dinner. Those little things can really add up." And not only is Nevertheless shelling out advice for new bands, they are eager to talk about doing things a little different while recording their second album, *In The Making...* with producer Rob Hawkins (Fireflight, Dizmas). "We wanted to make sure we did not make the same record again. So we decided to pursue other producers" states AJ. "We had always admired his creativity… He had all of these ideas about simplicity and creating something fresh that really grabbed our attention. It felt right," explains Joshua. The band also avoided as many current studio tricks as possible. "One annoying thing that we avoided this time around was layering the record with so many background vocals that it would take a choir to sing live. *In The Making...* only has parts that we can cover live, and AJ sang all of the backgrounds, as opposed to me layering my voice over and over."

"One thing we tried to stay away from this record was unnecessary parts," states AJ. "Rob and I really tried to keep each other in check while recording. We just constantly asked ourselves as we recorded, 'Is this part really gonna make this song better?'"

"We are still trying to figure out the necessary steps to becoming the most complete version of Nevertheless that we can be. I know that touring and publicity is important, but honest music still has to remain the focal point," concludes Joshua.

Texas rock band **One Minute Halo** recently signed with Dallas-based indie label Empiric Records and plans to release its debut album, *Against the Grain*, in early 2009. The project will have national distribution via Empiric and Universal/Fontana. To give fans a taste of the upcoming album, One Minute Halo released a four-song EP entitled *Places* on July 1. All four songs will also appear on the full-length album that was produced by Pillar's **Noah Henson** and **Travis Wyrick** (P.O.D., Pillar, Disciple). One Minute Halo is managed by **Michael "Kalel" Wittig** of Pillar along with JMA Music, and this fall the band will join fellow rockers **Spoken** for a three-week run in September. The group is also scheduled to appear on *Shout Fest* this fall.

Progressive rock band **Leeland** launched TheOppositeWay.com, an online home for all fans to share their stories about how they're living life the opposite way, and to be encouraged to continue to do so. Leeland Mooring shares, "It is our heart's desire to help raise up a new generation of worshippers, who aren't afraid to live different from the world; who aren't afraid to live the opposite way. You aren't going to look cool, and you're not going to fit in when living the opposite way. However, the peace and contentment in the arms of Jesus, are worth everything, compared to the nothingness that this passing world will offer." Leeland's song "Brighter Days" was used on June 22nd's episode of Army Wives, on the Lifetime Television Network.

Krystal Meyers' new music video, "Make Some Noise," premieres on new.music.yahoo.com, where it is expected to garner as many as 2-3 million impressions, along with 150,000 full streams of the video.

Purple Door Arts and Music Festival will host on its Main Stage: **Emery**, **Skillet**, **Sherwood**, **Disciple**, and **Red** (who are taking a break from their summer tour with Seether to play Purple Door); while the HM Magazine Stage will feature: **August Burns Red**, **Haste The Day**, **The Showdown**, and **Oh Sleeper**. The Gallery Stage will host: Seabird, **Dennison Witmer**, who is playing at his 10th Purple Door–the most any artist has played, and accomplished female harpist, **Timbre**.

HARDNEWS
Page twelve

Enough Already!

BY JAMIE LEE RAKE

KEITH GREEN's *The Live Experience* (Sparrow) testifies not only to the late singer-songwriter's fiery challenges to Christian devotion, but equally to his gifts of inventive melodicism and pianism bridging pop and classical sensibilities. Culled from four years' of performamces, Green, 88 keys and (a bit of) his provocative preaching continue to inspire asking why his Father took take him home so young.* (KeithGreen.com)

Before most anyone in the Xian market knew what adult alternative meant, **PATSY MOORE** exemplified it on two longplayers in the early '90s. She's moved on from cCm, but her long-delayed *The Most Private Confessions of Saint Clair* (Papa Chuy) expands upon her sonic pallet in ways that continue to amaze. If you're eclectic enough to host Nina Hagen, Sarah Maclachlan, Ani DiFranco and Nina Simone in your music collection, (re)discovering Moore may be a move you want to make soon.** (PatsyMoore.com)

OMEGA BUGEME OKELLO sings in tongues native to her birthplace of Uganda, but *Kiwomera Emmeeme* (Axel Om) would be some sweet Afro-pop no matter the language. Her Myspace lists her as jazz/gospel/alternative, but there's enough neo-soul vibery about her to attract adventurous r&b heads, too. Put her on shuffle amid Lauren Hill, Diana Krall and Angelique Kidjo, and Okello makes a seamless, but unique, fit. (OmegaWorldMusic.com)

ASHMONT HILL: a current, godly Fifth Dimension? That's to say the African-American Bostonian co-ed sibling quartet praise and worship on their self-titled debut (Axiom) in a similar skin color-confounding fashion as Marilyn McCoo's old group. Soul gospel radio has embraced them fondly, but multi-culti success similar to that of Martha Munizzi and Israel Houghton should be happenning for them by the time you read this. Deservedly so. (MySpace.com/AshmontHill)

CLINT BROWN may be Ashmont Hill's inverse: a European-American pastor fond of black choral backing and intermittent funkiness. Vocally, he's like the brother Larnelle Harris and Lee Greenwood coulda' shared. If *Fall Like Rain* (Tribe Music Group/Universal Christian) goes a tad overboard, he does associate with word-faith folks. Still, Brown's solid about his passionate slickness. Conflating Earth, Wind & Fire and The Imperials in a duet with Russ Taff's also a tasty touch. (ClintBrown.net)

Need I say it again? Send. More.Music! Ship it to P.O. Box 29;Waupun, WI for my perusal and approval.
–Jamie Lee Rake

*HM associate John J. Thompson co-produced this live album.

**yours truly writes a column for Moore's ezine, *The Bohemian Aesthetic* (but would dig her tuneage regardless)

News bullets

Dance Gavin Dance have posted a new song, "Here As Alex English" from their forthcoming self-titled album, to be released on Aug 19th.

New Sparrow Records artist **Above The Golden State** released their self-titled debut on July 22. Fans of all music styles, naming influences from Weezer, Five Iron Frenzy and Delirious to The Beatles and Duke Ellington, Above the Golden State's members will quickly describe their sound as "West Coast Rock, Pop." "We're doing our best not to call it surf-rock," explains frontman **Michael Watson**, "but yeah, basically, it's that with a touch of the rainy Northwest."

Solid State Records' devastating metal group **Mychildren Mybride** just wrapped up the recording of a video for "Faithless."

A Plea For Purging unveiled a new song on its myspace page, "Motives."

A couple months ago Paramore revealed to UK outlet *Rocklouder* that **Edison Glass** was its "Tip for 2008."

Influential British metal band **Seventh Angel** has announced that they have reunited. The band are working on a new studio album and are set to hit the festival circuit later this year.

Sancrosant Records proudly welcomes the newest family member to its roster of artists: Lansing, Michigan's **As Bound With Them**. Sancrosanct will be re-releasing the band's 2007 indie release, *A Safer World*.

Third Day will be able to add a performance on NBC's The Tonight Show with Jay Leno to their impressive resume. Following this late July appearance will be the Music Builds Tour with **Switchfoot**, **Robert Randolph & the Family Band** and **Jars of Clay**.

In case you missed it, **Underoath** headlined the *Rockstar Mayhem Tour* this summer with Slipknot, Disturbed, Mastodon and Dragonforce, among others.

LIVE REPORT

Vans Warped Tour 2008

St. Louis, July 1

BY BRIAN QUINCY NEWCOMB

MARYLAND HEIGHTS, MO – As touring daylong music festivals go, Warped is one of a kind. Carrying the spirit of Lollapalooza and HORDE, yet demonstrating a democratic, DIY punk attitude and leaning toward that music alongside indie alternative, the Warped experience lacks all the pretense and nonsense of the corporate rock industrial complex.

On this year's *Vans Warped Tour*, I have to say the line-up was a little less star-driven (Green Day and Weezer have headlined in the past), and as much as I was open to a musical experience that would blow me away – the 2008 edition felt pretty much like business as usual. But, as they say, business was good – albeit missing a bit of the spark.

We arrived by noon, just in time for **Relient K**'s 12:20 slot. Opening with the one-two punch of "Be My Escape" and "High of 75" (both from the *Mmhmm* record), the Matt Thiessen-led quintet proved that they understood what it takes to attract and hold a punk crowd in the hot sun. For the most part, the bits of piano in the first track and here and there in "Devastation and Reform" added some subtlety and nuance to their power pop that would be sadly missed in most sets of the day. "The Best Thing" proved to be a bit too slight when you have just 30 minutes to bring your best things forward. While I tend to think of Relient K as the pop/rock band my 10-year-old son loves, they offered up a smart and impressive set of worthwhile power pop suitable for a *Warped* crowd in broad daylight.

Next, **Norma Jean** was deconstructing "A Grand Scene for a Color Film" in full scream mode. Throughout, Cory Brandan exhibited the kind of energy described in a line from the song played at the end of the set ("Charactarantula"): "Passion cries out from our fiery blaze of words." But honestly, I don't really make out the words in Norma Jean's live set; what's blazing is the guitars, the rhythms, the throaty emotional vocals. "It's a beautiful day… for metal." In a set that included – I think – "Small Spark vs. A Great Forest," "Bayonetwork" and "Songs Sound Much Sadder," Brandan introduced the one track from their September release, *The Anti-Mother*, "Robots 3, Humans 0" with the snarky come on, "It's a very pissed off record – it will make you want to punch a baby," a comment I assumed was to be taken as a joke.

Then **Anberlin** came on, rocking harder than I remembered when they were introducing *Cities* while on tour with Story of the Year. "Godspeed" opened from that record, but then they leaned back for "The Feel Good Drag" and "A Day Late" from *Never Take Friendship Personal*. "Hello Alone" and "Paperthin Hymn" were punchy power-pop, followed by "Adelaide" and "Dismantle. Repair."

As we came upon the Hurley stage to check out the 3:30 pm set by The Devil Wears Prada, I was struck by the number of bands on my must-see list that had high interest for my HM editor. Was it two years ago, when *Rolling Stone* ran a story about how Fat Mike of NOFX practically single-handedly chased Underoath off the tour, by making fun of them at their Bible studies with fans? In an interview with UO drummer and Almost leader, Aaron Gillespie, for a CCM cover, I was assured that was not the case; but something has changed. While ccm rockers like MXPX were once tolerated on the *Warped* stages, these days the presence of Christian bands seems a dominant force – even if much of the audience seems oblivious of that fact.

Go online to read the complete piece, including reviews of performances by **As I Lay Dying**, **The Devil Wears Prada**, **Greeley Estates**, **Family Force 5**, and **Paramore**.

Clockwise from top: Norma Jean's Cory Brandan; Paramore's Hayley Williams; Family Force 5's Phatty; Anberlin's Deon Rexroat & Stephen Christian; Relient K's Matt Thiessen. [Photos by Brian Quincy Newcomb] For a longer review, go to hmmag.com

WRENCH IN THE WORKS

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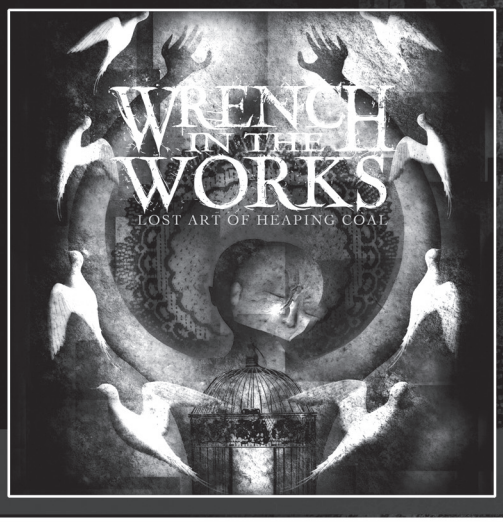

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LIVE REPORT

Cornerstone 2008

June 30 - July 5

BY DOUG VAN PELT

BUSHNELL, IL – When we arrived around 5pm on Monday, the festival looked like it was already hopping. Cars, RVs, tents and people were all over the place ... and it wasn't even "Tooth & Nail Day" yet! Not much was happening on Monday, but it didn't take long for the 42+ generator stages to kick into life. The DIY "entertainment district" created by these registered generator stages was certainly one of the major sub-plots of this year's fest, as it gave autonomy to tons of temporary venues. While the bleed-over of sound was easy to complain about, there was something very cool about releasing this kind of creativity to the "everyman" with a few amps.

One of the standouts from T&N Day was **Ivoryline**. Their live show and loud mix emphasized their identity as a rock band ... over and above (but not squelching) the prominent melody of their fine debut album.

Jimmy Ryan's new band, **Trenches**, played a furiously heavy, complex yet very metal set. Almost taking a deconstructionist angle with their music, their bassist was madly torturing his 5-string bass like he was trying to score points with the amount of different notes he could hit. The stage volume and sheer power was immense. Fans of Frodus and Warlord should dig their music immediately, but it'll be too noisy for others.

Thieves & Liars proved once again how full and big a trio can be. It was so refreshing and enjoyable to hear Corey Edelmann (former NIV and Project 86 guitarist) masterfully play his guitar. He bent the strings to add much feeling and accents to many a note. It's a rare thing these days to see these kinds of skills and emotion from a guitar player.

Flyleaf packed out the Main Stage on Wednesday. I was curious to see what their shock-absorber-for-legs bassist (Pat Seals) would do with this enormous stage. He launched himself over the corner gap between catwalk and stage several times, and spent some time surfing on his back and on the ground with the crowd as well. Lacey Mosley spoke very humbly and sincerely about how special it was for them to play to an audience that related with their spiritual identity.

Drottnar performed their set decked out in Russian military officer uniforms, the stoicism of which added a nice dynamic to their energetic and frenetic sounds.

The Famine did not disappoint, with brutal, precise and energetic metal. Their tourmates **Demon Hunter** put on a solid set on the Main Stage Saturday night. It was **Living Sacrifice** that had a tent bursting from the sides as they blazed through a set of tunes that sounded as tight and brutal as the last time they played (about five years ago), as if they just stepped right back into their roles as if it were only yesterday. Bruce Fitzhugh made it a point to clarify the permanent basis of the band. "This isn't a one-off," he proclaimed. When they played "Enthroned," the amazingly fast fret fingering between Fitzhugh and Rocky Gray was amazing. Lance Garvin's thunderous drumming was incredible. The band exceeded my very high expectations.

Main Line Riders (Cliffy Huntington's new band) sounded bratty, on, and full of energy. Later, on the Sanctuary Stage, it was the crazy experience known as a **Grave Robber** show. Clad in *Creep Show* style dripping flesh and skull masks and rag-tag black outfits, the band made the entire show a themed experience, but didn't let the visual show overpower its tight performance. Fans of The Misfits would love this band. A must-have experience, to be sure.

Still Remains played its last show, which was sad to contemplate, but great to hear. South Africa's **The Awakening** capped off an Industrial/Goth night with a memorable performance and strong songs.

Clockwise from top: Still Remains' Jordan Whelan & Mike Church; Drottnar's Sven-Erik Lind; Main Line Riders' Cliffy; Grave Robber's Wretched; Demon Hunter's Ryan Clark. [Photos by Doug Van Pelt] See more in-depth review at the Editor's blog at hmmag.com

BON VOYAGE

BY MARK SALOMON

All that's missing is the millions.

For some twenty years now, Jason Martin has been injecting relevant music into the world. To be honest, I don't think enough people know this, but they should. They're missing out on something important.

From the early days of the post-Jesus Movement influx of music and art made by Christian people – also known as the "Before Tooth and Nail" era – to the birth of Tooth and Nail Records and today's current… err… (I'll say it) glut, he's maintained a steady presence. Martin's been a kind of metronome – pretty much an album a year for longer than most people in bands today have been alive. This isn't an old man we're talking about – just a guy who was well into his musical career when most people were studying for their Learner's Permit. Respected by his peers and quite frankly adored by his fans, the only remaining hill to climb would seem to be that ever elusive "hit," and the kind of life-altering success that typically follows. Be it making music with his band, Starflyer 59 (we're talking about two whole pages alone on the notoriously behind-the-times allmusic.com), co-writing projects with literally scores of his peers, or influencing actual decades worth of artists, the simple fact is that Martin doesn't stop working. Somehow such a prolific artist has yet to break into the mainstream – but it's not for lack of trying.

I first got to know Jason when my band, Stavesacre, demoed a couple songs with him for our last album, *How To Live With a Curse*. While at the studio, he struck me as the kind of person who just creates music as a natural function, and to be honest he made me feel a little lazy. I've since had the opportunity to work with him and my respect for his work ethic hasn't changed at all. When given the opportunity to write about him – awkward as that could be – I figured this would at the very least be an opportunity to brag on the guy. (And by the way: If you the reader have a problem with that, just make, like, twenty albums of your own stuff and I'll brag on you, too.)

Taking advantage of the advances in technology available to the independent producer over the last ten years, Martin has been slotting gigs back to back to back, and so on. As anyone who knows him will tell you, he doesn't allow a whole lot in the way of gaps – much less, wasted time. Be it Starflyer's next release; some side project; or tracking, mixing, and production, the theme is pretty simple: Always working, always busy. (Dear Aspiring Rock Star: you might want to read that last part again.)

Unfortunately, there's only so much time in the day, the week, the year – and every song can't be on a Starflyer 59 album. What is the answer to this problem if you're a person who can't help but make music? Do something else. For at least the next few minutes, that something else is Bon Voyage.

Revisiting a project he started with his wife, Julie, some ten years ago, Bon Voyage's *Lies*, the band's third album (after 1998's self-titled debut, and 2002's *The Right Amount*) is yet another layer of the funky foundation that is Martin's signature blend of everything cool from the last thirty years.

While I've mentioned that he's always working, I think it's equally important to note the he's always growing. He was pretty good at this stuff when I first met him, but now he's kinda… great. Surf guitars meet smoky bars and just enough 80's pop to smooth out the rough edges. Listen to those bass and keyboard lines and tell me you don't wish you could dance a little better. (Go ahead: blast "Don't Lie" in the privacy of your home and see if you can't do something about that.) It's as if Martin were keeping BV on the back burner till he'd perfected the sound he's been working on all these years – it's a little dark, a little light, a little clean, a little dirty. It's what it should be.

Julie's vocals have grown and somehow become… hmm. How does one say this and still show up for a poker game at the Martin household? Put it this way: one of the listener reviews from iTunes for *The Right Amount* – written by a person known only as "Rock Thunder" – described her voice with an adjective that rhymes with "Mexi" (please figure that out and let's move on) and the new tracks take that to another level. Could be that I'm just hearing the voice attached to the ultra-sassy, Marlene Dietrich-era Hollywood glamour shots that make up the album artwork; could also be the obvious comfort level that she has with not only her voice, but with the material. Either way, it ain't easy pulling off a cover of "Girlfriend In A Coma" (the Smiths – you really should already know this) on an album you made with your husband. Jus' sayin'.

Listening to the self-titled album (for the first time) after fully taking in *Lies* is kind of a mind-blower: like looking at photos from Junior High School – you know, the intentions were good, but as to the test of time? Not quite. Where the self-titled album is time stamped with a number of fuzzed-out, early-Indie Rock tracks, the songs on *Lies* provide complementary contrast and dynamic shifts from the first track to the last. The songs transition from ridiculous, tight compression ("Birthday") to Jon Hughes film soundtrack territory ("Bad Friend") to bass-blasting, over-the-top dynamics ("The Good Life") – all in one album.

We're talking about leaps and bounds in production and style over these last ten, busy years – so something's working. The sound is both modern and (sorry to use this horrible non-word) retro, but never too much of either. It's outside of a specific time frame, and that typically means the person making the music is doing something important.

Obviously, I believe that what's coming out of Martin's mini-Motown is important; now if I could just get about a million people to feel the same way, there might be some justice in the world. My recommendation to you, dear reader – and you, "Rock Thunder," wherever you are – is to pick up the album and learn that on your own. But, while you're at it, if you know someone that can get this guy his due propers – make it happen.

Photo: Zach Hodges

myspace.com/bonvoyagemusic

one more mini-Motown

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THE CLASSIC CRIME

BY BRAD MOIST

The late 90's music scene was full of great albums from bands like the Foo Fighters (*The Colour and the Shape*), Rage Against The Machine (*The Battle Of Los Angeles*), Green Day (*Nimrod*), and many more. Do you remember the feeling you got when you heard those albums for the first time? Do you remember the connection you had with great songs? The Classic Crime does.

"In 1997, at the age of fourteen, I purchased Third Eye Blind's self-titled debut record. It blew my mind in every way, and still does. The charisma, lyrics, pop sensibility and depth of that record is intense. It grabs you with catchy rhythms and melodies, but keeps you with vibe and depth… It's just incredible," states lead singer Matt MacDonald. "I remember buying Foo Fighters *The Colour and the Shape*," says drummer Skip Erickson. "After hearing songs like 'Hero' and 'Everlong', I knew these guys were here to stay. This album was packed with so much power and emotion. Dave proved himself as a great songwriter, and a decade later the Foo Fighters are still making great music and topping the charts." And that's exactly what The Classic Crime have set out to do with their second full-length album, *The Silver Chord*. "Songs are the soundtrack to my life, and I feel like I have a relationship with the folks that sing them, even if I don't," says MacDonald. "It is our hope to have that sort of relationship with the people that listen to our music."

Produced by Michael "Elvis" Baskette (Incubus, Chevelle), *The Silver Chord* is titled after the ancient literary metaphor about the connection between life and death. "Elvis just really understood what we were trying to do. We went about things completely different, recording the album like a 90's alternative record rather than a 2008 rock record. We didn't use click tracks or borrowed samples," explains MacDonald. "The songs ebb and flow, push and pull with the music, because we played along while Skip tracked drums in order to give it a 'live' feel."

Inspiration for the album came from regular day life of a band on the road in a van as well as other unexpected moments. Guitarist Robbie Negrin explains how creating this album brought moments of escape, which clearly helped make *The Silver Chord* such a strong second album. "Writing guitar parts is kind of an escape from the stresses of the road and in trying to make a relationship work while touring. I think we all play to escape the crappy things in life. In the end, the guitar always seems to win." MacDonald talks about those things that bands do when they wish they could escape from time to time, though there is some obvious road wisdom that has come as a result. "Touring is one of the most taxing things; mentally, physically, and financially. It's hard for artists to live in a van with other eccentric and moody people, and it's been a real self-examination and a magnification of all of our faults. You can find that self-examination in most of the songs on this record."

Other than regular day life on the road, a trip to *Bodies...the Exhibition* provided inspiration specifically for the song "Abracadavers."

"The song is about some of the thoughts (that) can be inspired from witnessing death and mortality in general. Some of those images are still stuck in my head," explains MacDonald. "I don't think any of our songs are negative or encourage any negative behavior. They are simply reflections of life, culture, thoughts and experiences. Our life is different now than when we wrote *Albatross*; we've been through more trials and tribulations in the last three years than all the other years combined. I personally appreciate honest music, music that gets down to what's real, the between the lines stuff that most people don't like talking about. I think it's in that place that you can really relate to someone on an intimate level, because you can take them some place vulnerable and be vulnerable with them there."

theclassiccrime.com

future classic rock in mind

THE HARD MUSIC MAGAZINE:

Something for everyone...

SUPERCHICK

BY STEVEN DOUGLAS LOSEY

When I received an email from HM Editor and grand pooh bah Doug Van Pelt about a story with Superchick, I raised my eyebrow, I remembered back a few years and thought to myself, 'Isn't this the band that had a song about Barlow Girl?' Doug told me to listen to the band's latest opus, *Rock What You Got*, and try to make the band sound cool. He said to listen to cut four, called "Hey Hey." Spinning the disc I heard infectious pop/rock melodies, but there was also much more spit and vinegar than I expected. Then I turned to track four and what immediately came to mind was "The Beautiful People" from Marilyn Manson. It was then that I knew Van Pelt may be on to something.

With their fourth studio album Superchick has broken down preconceived notions. No, they haven't turned into Underoath, but they've made a passionate record that speaks to the Y generation in a language they can understand. "With this generation it's so easy to be angry and easy to be hopeless," says the band's bassist Matt Dally. "The bottom line is there is hope, and kids want something real. They want something to be a part of and they don't care how heavy it is."

The truth is that Superchick is a band with hearts for God. Stylistically they may have honed their sound to something more edgy and they may come across a bit cooler, but they just want to see a generation grow closer to Christ. "So many times kids just want you to invest in their lives – whether it's cool or not," says Dally. "I see pastors so many times that are trying to be cool while they're missing the point – kids respond to being real. If you're a punk, be a punk. If you're a scientist, be a scientist. If you're good at school, be good at school and don't act like you're not."

Superchick started the recording process with many songs already in the can. They were pretty much ready to lay down the tracks when they decided what they had just wasn't good enough. "We had 70% of the songs done when we entered the studio, but we got to a place where we said 'That isn't working,'" Dally remembers. "Our philosophy on this record was: 'Good is the enemy of great.' There are times on this disc where we would record a hundred takes just because we wanted to make things perfect, we wanted to make things the greatest they could be."

Producer and keyboardist Max Hsu was just what the band needed to hone their chops and give each cut the intensity that it deserved. On the song "Hold," he insisted that vocalist Tricia Brock totally exaggerate the vocal take. "Max really wanted some sass out of some of that vocal," Dally recalls. "Tricia [Brock] wasn't throwing it down quite enough. She went in and gave this over-the-top take that completely came out killer. I see genius at work when I see Max producing our stuff. He's extremely good at getting what he wants out of people."

So, back to the Mansonesque cut four again. The tune is called "Hey Hey," and it shows the band at its rocking best as whispering vocals give way to mean, distorted guitars. "That's a song we've always wanted to do," says Dally. "We always wanted to get aggressive, but we were always kind of afraid to do it. We didn't write the song for the critiques or the label; the song was for us. It's something that we took a chance on, and people are flipping out over it."

[Photo: Max Hsu]

myspace.com/superchick

Good is the enemy of great

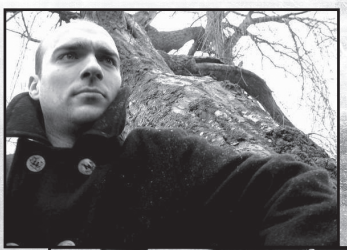
THE HARD MUSIC MAGAZINE:

Something for everyone...

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENTS

A BUZZWORTHY AND INDEPENDENT ARTIST NAMED TODD EVANS SHARES THE SPOTLIGHT WITH HIS DESERVING PEERS – ARTISTS HE LIKES, ETC. TODD'S MAIN ACT THESE DAYS IS KNOWN AS:

The Golden Sounds *thegoldensounds.com*
"I currently have been working with a new line-up and a group of new songs. We plan to record soon and begin playing shows in support of the new album. After three full-lengths and an EP ... this will be the fourth full-length album. MTV has also requested material for use in some shows."
His other band, **Atticus Fault**, *myspace.com/atticusfault* is finishing their new album, as of yet untitled.
This busy bee (who also works at Nashville's Rocketown) has another ("electronic") side-project called **Wire Diary**.
myspace.com/wirediary



Jeremy Enigk
Jeremy Enigk, the former frontman of legendary band Sunny Day Real Estate, released, in my opinion, one of the best records of all time. *Return Of The Frog Queen* was released as his first solo record in 1996. A raw, beautifully orchestrated album of an open heart. Don't know what else to say about it. He has since released his second solo record, entitled *World Waits*. Let's just say his recordings deserve a place in your heart.
lewishollow.com

Suns of Norway
Kirk Cornelius now resides in New York with his wife, of Venus Hum fame, working on his follow-up to his debut record. The first record is very meditative and takes you on a spiritual journey through life's love, loss and yearnings.
myspace.com/thesunsofnorway

Hammock
So, I will let the lead singer of Sigur Ros tell you about this band: "You know the secret: good soundscapes and good melodies...your albums are wonderful."
hammockmusic.com

Kat Jones
An absolutely wonderful treasure that more people need to hear. She gives me the tingle of Mazzy Starr but can take it to an entirely different level. Her vocals can be subtle one moment and then be released the next in a fury of raw emotion that takes you by the heart and doesn't let go.
myspace.com/katjones

Album reviews

23 ALBUMS 65 ENTERTAINMENT 64 BOOKS & GADGETS

THE SHOWDOWN

BACK BREAKER

The Showdown put out one of the greatest debut albums ever in A Chorus of Obliteration. It was pure metal, punishing and fast. Since then, they've been working to solidify their name in the ranks of the best metal around, and with Back Breaker, they're certainly on the right road. In the vein of Maylene and the Sons of Disaster and Becoming the Archetype, they've mastered the new Southern-style of metal, and if you liked what they've done in the past, you're going to continue to like what they're doing now.

One of the best things about the band is that they're unapologetic in their desire to play metal. They just want to get up there, play it fast and break it down. With *Back Breaker*, they've definitely done that. Each song on the record is named after a Greek god, and then subtitled. The track the record is titled after, "Achilles—The Backbreaker," (one of the best on the album) is particularly representative of what the record is like. Quick riffs kick it off and drag you in; a catchy chorus with slick guitars move it into a breakdown, ending with the chant, "Rise!"

When playing metal, it might be easy to wash, rinse, repeat that cycle; but The Showdown comes with catchy enough hooks and breakdowns you can remember that, even if the cycle is perpetuated, you don't even notice.

If there's one complaint about the record, I'd like to see the technical flair of the band show up more throughout the release. There's no doubt of the band's technical proficiency and there are definitely flairs of brilliance, but I'd just like to see more of it. The best thing about metal is that you can go over the top and get away with it; I want to see The Showdown go over the top a little more and punish us for listening to the record. ~~[TOOTH AND NAIL] DAVID STAGG~~

Rating system

05 *CLASSIC*
04 *FABULOUS*
03 *SOLID*
02 *SUSPECT*
01 *AMISS*
***** *1/2*

UNDEROATH

LOST IN THE SOUND OF SEPARATION

I don't know what Underoath would have to have done to make their latest release a five-star record, but I do know that they definitely didn't find it. That's not to say the record isn't a good one – which it is – but it seems like it's just another notch in a bedpost. In the past, Underoath has come strong with pushing the envelope and being ahead of the curve in their genre. Back in the day, the metal Underoath gave way to the metalcore Underoath in *They're Only Chasing Safety*, a move that catapulted them to the top of their game and gave them immense recognition. When they put out *Define The Great Line*, they experimented a bit with instrumental tracks to mixed results, but they continued to do well, leaning on the edge of that cliff. And now, with *Lost in the Sound of Separation*, they seem to have reverted to a version of *They're Only Chasing Safety* and not dangled their feet over the cliff, ready to jump. Everything you'd expect from an Underoath record is still there: catchy lyrics and chants, breakdowns, a spastic flurry of guitar riffs and drumming. They re-visit the ethereal vibe of some of the tracks on *Define The Great Line*, such as in the middle of the song "Too Bright To See" through to the end – it's less the metalcore Underoath you know and more set-the-mood metal; the obligatory end-of-the-CD instrumental "Desolate Earth" also follows suit. They still bring the heaviness as well – tracks such as the "Anyone" and "We Are The Involuntary" are particularly punishing – but at the same time, I feel like I've heard the songs before. While this isn't always a bad thing, Underoath have set their bar so high, I was expecting either a complete change of direction or songs that would physically push me out of my seat. In the midst of the Underoath career, the record feels like it's going to be forgettable. It's like that one year in school where you felt like you did a lot, but couldn't exactly put a finger on what was so significant about it. ~~[TOOTH & NAIL] DAVID STAGG~~

JON FOREMAN

SUMMER EP

If you've been following Jon Foreman's solo EP series – beginning with *Winter* and now ending with *Summer* – you already realize how little the weather impacts this talented singer/songwriter's oftentimes gloomy lyrical perspective. But the sun nevertheless momentarily peeks through during this final six-song release with The Beach Boys harmonies that brighten "Deep In Your Eyes." And like with prior editions, Foreman shows himself to be in a mighty adventurous musical mood. Trumpets call out during "A Mirror Is Harder To Hold," while sitar strains stand out during "Resurrect Me." But Foreman-the-cynic screams out loud and clear during "Instead Of A Show," which – seemingly – takes a shot at the Christian music scene. "I hate all your show and pretense / The hypocrisy of your praise / The hypocrisy of your festivals / I hate all your show." While Foreman is harsh toward these misbehaving brothers and sisters, he's equally hard on himself with his cries during "Resurrect Me." It may be *Summer* now, but *Winter* sure doesn't seem too far away. ~~[CREDENTIAL] DAN MACINTOSH~~

NORMA JEAN

THE ANTI-MOTHER

Norma Jean can't escape their dirty Southern roots even if they tried (but they never would). And even after vocalist Cory Brandan attempts to instill some sort of structured formula to the group's songs on their fourth album, *The Anti-Mother* (imagine if Thrice's Dustin Kensrue constantly maintained his sing-shout), the band still manages to sneak a sense of experimental chaos that is signature and key to their existence. While Brandan might be winning the battle to tame his barbeque loving bandmates (hear the uncharacteristic catchy rock chorus of the almost title track "Death Of The Anti-Mother"), the high-pitched guitars still sporadically cut with the tension of a horror movie. ~~[SOLID STATE] DAN FRAZIER~~

INHALE EXHALE

I SWEAR...

Canton, Ohio's finest metalcore outfit known as Inhale Exhale deliver more blood boiling metalcore with their second Solid State Records release, *I Swear...* While the band shreds with precision and strikes out brutal breakdowns suitable for roundhouse kicks and floor punches, the band signifies itself with straightforward rock choruses ripe with melodic relief similar to Saosin or if later life Embodyment decided to return to their roots. The intro to the track "No One Is Invincible" yields a potent potential in the vein of Dredg, but the hardcore elements dominate too often to truly let it soar. If they ever stop worrying about maintaining the momentum in the mosh pit, Inhale Exhale will naturally become masters of epically beautiful rock. ~~[SOLID STATE] DAN FRAZIER~~

TAKE IT BACK!

CAN'T FIGHT ROBOTS

Take It Back!, wielding an energy-inducing exclamation point at the end of their name, is a band that requires caffeine injections prior to listening. Their style, as made evident on their list of influences, resembles the hardcore punk hammerings of Stretch Arm Strong. They lay a barrage of punk beats and distorted power chords onto each of their heartfelt tracks. The vocals are rough and gritty as they bellow forth passionate yet simple messages, attempting to draw their listeners into a close-knit community. Vocally, you'll hear a Dogwood-esque tone from lead singer Zack, and you'll also catch some hardcore backup screams along with occasional, nasally melodies from their two corroborating vocalists Nick & Andy. Like most young punk bands, Take It Back! features no shortage of adolescent angst and anthemic rallying cries. They are a band that delivers positive messages with themes full of hope and change; but by screaming, shouting, and pounding this message through their distorted instruments, the listener may be left feeling more angst-ridden than before. However, for the young Christian teen looking to encompass his or her dual desires for rebellion and worship, Take It Back! certainly delivers. ~~[FACEDOWN] WESLEY NORMAN~~

THE CLASSIC CRIME

THE SILVER CORD

The Classic Crime showed potential as a promising rock band on their explosive full-length debut *Albatross* in 2006, but a bit of their mystique waned when they released the despairing acoustic EP *Seattle Sessions* this past November. Although that drowsy unplugged collection failed to keep a moth's attention, the quintet re-grouped and shot massive doses of adrenaline into their climactic sophomore set, *The Silver Cord*, which is easily their best work to date. While there is a constant theme of hopefulness and inspiration that lies within the lyrical content, The Classic Crime illuminates the album with dynamic showmanship best personified in captivating anthems like the melodic "The Way That You Are" and the chant-heavy "Grave Digging." Amidst their high energy current, the troupe occasionally slows down their emotional rollercoaster to craft seemingly perfect heartfelt ballads like "Salt In The Snow." Despite a few null instances and transitions, there isn't any reason to pull the cord. The Classic Crime is more alive than ever. ~~[TOOTH & NAIL] BEAR FRAZER~~

Ratings

	DV	Writer
The Showdown *Back Breaker*	04	03*
Underoath *Lost In The Sound Of Separation*	03*	03
Jon Foreman *Summer* EP	04	03
Norma Jean *The Anti-Mother*	04	04
Inhale Exhale *I Swear...*	04	03
Take It Back! *Can't Fight Robots*	04	03
The Classic Crime *The Silver Cord*	03	04
Kutless *To Know That You're Alive*	03	04
I Am Terrified *S/T*	04	03*
77s *Holy Ghost Building*	03	04
Called To Arms *The Last Lament* EP	03*	03*
Nevertheless *In The Making...*	03*	03
A Skylit Drive *Wires And The Concept Of Breathing*	03*	03*
Grave Robber *Be Afraid*	03*	03*

KUTLESS
TO KNOW THAT YOU'RE ALIVE

Life is hard. God is good. Vocalist Jon Micah Sumrall's thematic summation of Kutless's latest album, *To Know That You're Alive*, couldn't be more spot-on. And while a common thread, Kutless weaves it better than anyone. The Portland quintet has spent the last six years inhabiting radio rock territory, and the experience has taught them much. Musically and lyrically, there's nothing profound on *Alive,* and without a gimmick in either category, most bands would slip into sonic oblivion. But 1.5 million records sold reveal Kutless takes the familiar and perfects the craft. The distinctly harder tones on *Alive* stand out, but that doesn't mean the band has lost their BEC roots. "Complete" and "You" smooth the edges wonderfully, allowing Sumrall to show a stellar vocal range. "The Feeling" and "The Disease and the Cure" allow James Mead to take over the speakers, searing and blaring at all the right times. Yet within each song, it's the lyric describing universal themes of loss, grief, need, and belonging that bring meaning to the music. It's an exercise Kutless knows well and their experience shines through on this one. ~~[BEC] MATT CONNER~~

I AM TERRIFIED
S/T

If the metalcore genre has one inherent problem, it's this: finding definition between songs (and even bands in some cases) on any other merit than rhythmic pyrotechnics. The ability to snake around a time signature, placing thick sub-sonic chugs on obscure off-beats and quick dissonant bursts on even more obscure off-*off*-beats is impressive – no doubt. But it can quickly become oppressive if too heavily relied on, rather than exploring more traditional means such as melody and/or tonal possibilities. While it could be argued that the new self-titled EP from I Am Terrified (formerly Fixed Til Tuesday) suffers from a lack of weirdly syncopated passages and atonal riffing, this is actually one of its greater assets. Yes, there are still plenty of half-time breakdowns, technical drum fills, bowel-loosening bass lines, and enough guttural "what did he say?" barks to satisfy any fan of the form. But there is also an abundance of melody (with guitarmony aplenty…), and the occasional predictability comes off as inviting rather than off-putting. Vocalist Patrick Schefano has a satisfying scream, but shines as a vocalist when he actually sings, something that he, thankfully, does often. And while the front end of the EP is drenched in the modern, bass-y metal guitar tone typical of their peers, IAT shifts to a slightly more traditional, but no less metal sonic territory in later tracks. Taken together with an abundance of unapologetically worshipful lyrics and southern-fried sensibilities and you have a song collection that, while not groundbreaking, is no less vital to the genre: interesting. ~~[MONO VS. STEREO] MIKE HOGAN~~

77S
HOLY GHOST BUILDING

When Mike Roe first started making music with Lost Dogs, his blues-rock skills gave that act's recordings a necessary ax-tastic kick in the pants, thus preventing them from becoming overly folk-y and boring. But with *Holy Ghost Building*, the 77s fresh new take on old gospel and blues tunes, one can clearly hear the Lost Dogs' impact on Roe's longtime rock band. This effect is most apparent during "Everybody Ought To Pray," which is propelled by jauntily strummed acoustic guitar. Roe is at his vocal best during "City Of Refuge," however, where he's able to get every last throaty Mick Jagger-ism out of his system. Elsewhere, it's not hard to think about the swagger of "Brown Sugar" during "I'll Remember You, Love, In My Prayers," especially due to these two songs' eerily similar guitar patterns. Another delight is "When My Blue Moon Turns To Gold Again," because with it Roe gives us an extremely convincing Elvis impression, complete with a spry, Scotty Moore electric guitar solo and Jordonaire-esque backing vocals. The band's take on "I'm Working On A Building" also reminds one of Elvis, particularly the song "Little Sister," although Roe's high and lonesome vocal hearkens back to great brotherly bluegrass singing from the likes of The Louvin Brothers and The Stanley Brothers, instead of The King. *Holy Ghost Building* is not a complete re-think of standard spiritual material; instead Roe and the boys keep a good chunk of the originals' spirit intact, all the while adding their own indelible mark. *Holy Ghost Building* meets and surpasses all musical building code expectations. ~~[LO-FIDELITY] DAN MACINTOSH~~

CALLED TO ARMS
THE LAST LAMENT EP

The Last Lament is a 28-minute trip through nearly every sub genre of metal that exists. From the grindcore beginning of "The Last Lament" to the Southern groove of "Locked and Loaded" to the old fashioned shreds of "The Solace," these artists are not afraid to experiment and incorporate. While Called to Arms doesn't reinvent technical metal, they are quite innovative in weaving together sounds and styles no one ever expected to hear together without sounding like completely random mishmash. In fact, the songs actually sound complete through impressive musicianship and songwriting. The heavy parts are heavy with plenty of odd time signature breakdowns, speed picking, and blast beats; the metalcore riffage is plenty pit-worthy; the grooves get you moving; and the shreds will melt plenty of scenester faces. Where Called to Arms stand out most, however, is during the softer moments with their melodic sensibilities reminiscent of Misery Signals with a much broader emotional spectrum. I am excited to see what these guys can express within the scope and freedom of a full-length release. ~~[TRAGIC HERO] JOHN MCENTIRE~~

NEVERTHELESS
IN THE MAKING...

The piano is at the head of the table in Nevertheless' latest banquet of alternative pop/rock, *In The Making…*, and the taste is all the better for it. The band's debut, *Live Like We're Alive,* certainly had its finer moments, but the band credits Rob Hawkins (Fireflight) with helping to trim the fat. And the slimmer, healthier version of the Chattanooga band is looking quite nice for a sophomore album. *In The Making…* is largely an album of sleepy tunes, but vocalist Joshua Pearson's delivery is perfect for this setting. "It's True" utilizes strings to buoy the modern worship track while "Sleeping In" features Pearson's earnest delivery overtop bouncing piano rhythms. "Rest" and "Found My Way Back Again" pack an emotional punch in the album's slower tracks, so even with the drifting feel of *In the Making…*, there's never a dull moment to be had. ~~[FLICKER] MATT CONNER~~

A SKYLIT DRIVE
WIRES AND THE CONCEPT OF BREATHING

Anyone who ever wanted to know what it would sound like if Claudio Sanchez fronted a prog act torn in half by screamo will be greatly pleased with Lodi, California's A Skylit Drive. For their full-length debut, entitled *Wires And The Concept Of Breathing,* vocalist Michael "Jag" Jagmin delivers an uncanny faux-estrogen wail that highlights his bandmates' superb power rock. The sextet act could come off to be a tribute to Coheed And Cambria, except for the fact that bassist Brian White occasionally growls his throat to contrast Jagmin while his bandmates drop hard-hitting breakdowns. An unlikely pairing perhaps, but it all works well nonetheless. ~~[TRAGIC HERO] DAN FRAZIER~~

GRAVE ROBBER
BE AFRAID

Gothic, horror, hard rock band Grave Robber has released their debut CD, *Be Afraid,* upon an unsuspecting music scene. Judging by the artwork, one would expect to be sonically assaulted by a death metal band, but this is not the case. Musically, the disc is a series of well-crafted, hard-hitting tunes with influences ranging from the Ramones and Danzig to Gwar and the Misfits. The tracks are heavy, yet extremely hook-laden and catchy, and in no time at all you will find yourself singing along to tunes with titles such as "Bloodbath," "Rigor Mortis," and "Burn Witch Burn." Thematically, despite horrific looking costumes and references to all things macabre, band members Wretched, Maggot, Nameless, and Dr. Cadaver have a solid Christian message. This is evident especially on the track "Reanimator," where Wretched proclaims, "Spent three days in the bowels of hell / snatched the keys from the devil himself / rolled the stone and conquered the grave / demons tremble at his name." *Be Afraid* is horrifying, yet edifying, making it a truly inspired contradiction. ~~[RETROACTIVE] BRUCE MOORE~~

Read more album reviews on the "flip side" – page 69

The Becomin

ANDREW SCHWAB INTERVIEW WITH CALEB OW

THERE IS MANY AN ADJECTIVE TO DESCRIBE BRAND NEW ARTISTS, AND IN NEARLY EVERY CASE THE LABELS ARE APROPOS: "FRESHMEN"... "BABY BAND"... "GREEN." EACH TERM HAS A SUBTLE CONDESCENSION THAT IMPLIES SAID BAND HAS "A WHOLE LOT OF ROOM TO GROW." MOST BANDS WHO HAVE YET TO RELEASE A FULL-LENGTH RECORD EXUDE INEXPERIENCE AND ARE DESERVING OF THESE TERMS. IT'S PART OF COMING UP IN THIS INDUSTRY ... YOU START OUT GREEN, THEN EARN YOUR STRIPES THROUGH EXPERIENCE. BUT THERE IS NO WAY, WHEN YOU FIRST MEET THE BECOMING, YOU WOULD THINK TO APPLY SUCH LABELS, BUT YOU MIGHT USE TERMS LIKE "STRIKING" OR "TERRIFYING" OR EVEN "COMPELLING." AS COHESIVE AS A YOUNG UNIT COMES, THESE NASHVILLE GOTH-ROCKERS HAVE BEEN CREATED FOR ONE SOLE PURPOSE: TO EXEMPLIFY THE DARK ROCK PERSONA. I SPOKE WITH TOWERING FRONTMAN CALEB OWENS RECENTLY ABOUT THEIR NEW RECORD, THEIR EXPECTATIONS, AND HOW THEY PLAN TO DEAL WITH PAYING $17,000.00 PER GALLON OF GAS ON THE ROAD...

You guys have your first release under your belts (congratulations). How do you expect life to change now that you will be exposed on a more national scale?
We expect to meet a lot of new people, see a lot of places we never have before, and get the opportunity to share the stage with some great bands. I know in my younger years, I looked to music and those who created it for inspiration and direction many times. I can think of a number of bands whose music dramatically affected me. As we're exposed to a larger audience, we hope for our music to affect more people's lives, just like those who came before us did in ours.

I think one of the strengths of your band is your visual presentation. Is the cohesive "look" something that was considered in your original connection, or something that you developed together along the way?
The look is something that's been part of what drew us towards each other. I don't really care if it ruins our credibility to some people, or maybe sounds vain, but good individual style has definitely been a qualification for us. There has to be that cohesiveness. Imagine if Motley Crue, in their glammed-out prime, had one member who looked like he should be in Devo. The look is part of the attitude and statement (that) defines bands. Obviously, a similar taste in music, musical ability, and a love for what we do are more important ... but imaging is definitely important.

You are coming up during an unprecedented time in music. More than ever before it is difficult for new bands to sustain themselves, what with gas prices, the economy, and declining record sales. How are you preparing yourselves for the difficult road ahead?
Something's wrong with the world when such great creators of art such as Radiohead and Nine Inch Nails have to resort to giving away their records. But I still believe there are honest people out there who will pay for a record and monetarily support something that they believe in. More than ever, I think it's the responsibility of the artist to create music of substance that will stand the test of time. I know with our record, we tried to give the fans something a little more for their money. For instance, we decided to put 13 songs on the record rather

than the standard 10. We're also currently working on the packaging, which I think is going to be unique, and will hopefully encourage people to actually buy the record.

Talk about your experience in writing and recording the record. What are your favorite tracks and why?
We were fortunate enough to record at Dark Horse Studios outside Franklin, TN. It's an amazing log cabin-style compound secluded out in the middle of nowhere. We lived there while recording, so we basically cut ourselves off from society while making this record. We recorded during December and January, which was a great time to make this record. There is a lot of solitude that we experienced out there that translated onto the recordings. There's a track called "We're Already Dead" that's a personal favorite. It is one of those songs that was written right before we went in the studio, and it just clicked and came together on it's own. Another favorite is "Escape You," which is possibly the most personal song for me lyrically. It deals with desire, how we become attached to certain desires in our lives in moments of loneliness, that sort of thing.

What is one thing you want people to leave with when they are introduced to your band for the first time?
I don't really want to tell people what they should see, and I think our music is purposefully open-ended because what I want people to see may not be what's best for them to leave with. I think our music focuses heavily on the darker side of life… the injustices, the trials, and ultimately the reality of life, and especially, death. Some bands can write songs about sunshine and love and all of that, but that's never been something I've felt compelled to write. I think that sort of music has its place and is necessary. Don't get me wrong; I think our music has many hopeful moments. If there were one thing that I wanted people to take with them, I guess it would just be to leave thinking that what they just heard was heartfelt.

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Photo: Mark Jeffries

Krystal Mey

GIVE HER A MIC AND STAND BACK...

BY DAVID STAGG

I'm used to interviewing people. I've been doing it for over five years. I'm not saying I'm an interview god, but you do get used to different types of responses, different stereotypes, different personalities. What I am not used to is interviewing 20-year-old females who've already released three records and probably seen more of the world than I'll ever see. How do you approach it? What do you ask?

Turns out you don't have to ask a lot. Krystal Meyers is a talker. Ask a question and off she goes. This girl is sound-byte city. There isn't much writing that has to get done to make her quotes make sense; they've all got legs. For example:

• "I moved out of my parents' house two years ago and I think I just entered a new stage of life. I had to mature on a bunch of different levels, opening myself up to more diverse kinds of music."

• "There are other people who are like, 'You are too worldly! Are you still a Christian?' I haven't gotten a ton of that, but it's one of those things where it's like, 'Can't Christians have fun, too?'"

• "I completely am at heart a total rock chick. I'm so chill. I'm not your pop diva… I'm a girl, so yes, I do like my shoes and my bags and stuff, but I'm a rock chick at heart."

Rock chick or not, her latest effort, *Make Some Noise,* sounds a whole lot more like Kylie Minogue had a baby with Shiny Toy Guns. It's a fun record. It makes you want to dance. It's a little edgier than the conventional dance record, but there's absolutely no question it's a separation from her second release, *Dying For A Heart*, an Avril Lavigne rock-pop piece where a synthesizer wouldn't be mentioned in the same breath. "It's totally different," Krystal tells me. (I listened to both records before talking to her and asked her about it – this is one of those questions she already has and will continue to get.) "It's really different," she re-emphasized. "I wanted to make a record that reflected who I was and if I'm being real with myself, in my recordings, it should reflect that. I'm not going to do the same thing just because it was successful before. I'm growing up and hopefully [my fans will] grow up with me."

Here's my take on it: Her music and songwriting is maturing just as quick as she is. Coming from a first record where her single was "Anti-conformity," and songs she wrote when she was 13- or 14-years-old made the record, her songwriting is inevitably going to parallel the physical and emotional growth she's experiencing. And – she's going to hate this – but in an age where Miley Cyrus and the Jonas Brothers (all younger than she is) sell more albums and make more money than Las Vegas, she's also battling the "young generation" stereotype at the same time. How can we take you seriously? Did you really write those songs? Is your talent legit or manufactured? You think those questions as soon as you hear a teenage girl released a record. "You're right – it's hard to do when all these Disney artists are coming out and saying they've written all their songs," Krystal says – she knows these questions are coming, too. "To those people I just want to say, 'Hey, why don't you listen and give it a chance. Then you can tell me what you think. At the end of the song, if you think it's a cheesy, childish song, then fine. Just don't judge me by my cover.'

"As far as songwriting goes," she continues, "I've never really been intimidated by anyone being older or above me. I like to take direction, appreciate criticism, and at the end of day, I always realize it's my record and if I'm not going to be happy with it, [I'm] probably going to kick myself down the line. I've always been strong-willed in that aspect."

From talking to her, she's fairly self-aware – you almost have to be when every interviewer wants to know the same thing. Yes, I've been alive for only two decades. Yes, I can write a song. Yes, I'm maturing and my music changes. The irony is that it can sometimes take a lot for someone to be self-aware – a lot of input from the outside world. "From what I've been told, I have had a great deal of self-reflecting wisdom in my writing that's a bit older and more mature than you would think," Krystal says.

All common questions aside, she doesn't oftentimes have to deal with a heavier niche market. The Hard Music Magazine often pushes the envelope on the heavy side of things – a lot of you all out there are strictly metal, grindcore, two-step lovers who want nothing to do with a 19-year-old who puts out a self-proclaimed "Euro-Studio-54-'80s-throwback-pop record." I wanted to make sure she was aware of this. Turns out she is. She knows this magazine; she knows this market. She actually grew up listening to AC/DC and Led Zeppelin, and during the *Dying For A Heart* era, she was greatly influenced by Underoath and Killswitch Engage (and, according to her, she still is). But she's also aware that where her music writing is going, it won't exactly induce some pit moves. "I love that kind of music, that's what I've grown up on," Krystal says. "That's where my roots are. But I am who I am. I don't have the attitude of the pop starlet, but I want to put this [record] out – something that's different, something intriguing. I think all those bands like Underoath, when (they) do what they do, they want to do something that's edgy and something that can challenge people. That's what I'm trying to do, but in my own genre."

So take it or leave it, she's out to be true to herself. She wants your vote, yes; but more than that, she wants your educated vote. Listen to it before you throw it out the window because she's got blonde hair. "It's having fun," Krystal says. "It's being young and being able to experiment. If it works, great. If it doesn't, I'm happy with what I'm doing."

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Photo: Dominick Guillemot

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Norma Jean

WHEN MOMMA DOESN'T KNOW BEST

BY BRIAN QUINCY NEWCOMB

Photo: Ralf Strathmann

THERE'S A SCENE IN THE LOVELY LITTLE MOVIE ABOUT ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS, ADULTERY, PROCREATION AND PIE, *THE WAITRESS*, THAT COMPLETELY CAPTURES THE MESSAGE OF THE NEW NORMA JEAN DISC, *THE ANTI-MOTHER*, THEIR FOURTH ON SOLID STATE RECORDS.

Keri Russell plays a young pie chef and server desperate to escape her violent, dominating husband when she learns she's pregnant with his baby after a night lubricated by alcohol. A morality play that serves to warn against marrying badly and drinking that dulls judgment, as well living wastefully (see the Andy Griffith character), the young woman is not immediately taken with the prospect of her baby. But she eats properly, and takes to writing notes to her soon-to-be-born offspring that are honest and ultimately loving. Her fear of her husband and failure to escape, her willing participation in an affair with her doctor, her inability to see beyond her circumstances and love her child, (all) leave her feeling isolated and alone. Filled with self-loathing, sure that she doesn't have what parenthood requires, she writes to her child, simply that "I'm the Anti-Mother."

But, of course, even in Hollywood, redemption abounds. Jenna loves her daughter LuLu from the moment she's born. The new mom immediately expels the husband, ends the affair and devotes her life to the child and her future, with money from the timely departing benefactor, Old Joe, who offers this sage advice to his only friend, the gentle, long-suffering waitress: "start fresh."

It's a parable, really. A gospel parable at that, but unfortunately I first saw the movie on cable TV several days after meeting Norma Jean backstage at the *Warped Tour* stop near St. Louis. I never got to ask if that movie was where the title came from, but I'm guessing it's not, you know, "metal" to admit liking a "chick flick." Still, they admitted to watching a lot of movies on the road … and who does not like pie?

But the film and the new disc's message are quite in sync. Talking by phone a week before the band's St. Louis *Warped* performance, Cory Brandan explains the new album's concept: "The 'Anti-Mother' is a character that we created, but it's a part of ourselves, it's like a sub-personality that we all have. There's a moment of clarity when you're in a moment of decision-making, you're going to decide what to do, you're going to turn left or right, which way are you going to pick? It's the part of you that chooses something that is self-destructive, that part of you that is anti-nourishing. We all have something in us; we parent and mother ourselves all the time, and the Anti-Mother is the times we don't take care of ourselves."

Of course, Norma Jean carries labels like "Christian metalcore" and "post-hardcore," and Brandan says none of that matters. But the religious moniker requires some explanation: "That's a little tougher. Again, I don't really care

if people call us a 'Christian band,' we are all totally Christians, all of us. But again, it doesn't really matter. Our music is what it is. Music can't be Christian or non-Christian. I'm in a band because I like music. If I liked cooking, I'd go cook at a restaurant (which I do sometimes, by the way). But I'm in a band because I love music, not because I'm a Christian."

"We don't really care about that stuff, labels don't matter. We're heavy music; that's one thing. If someone calls us hardcore or trashcore it doesn't really offend us. People hear music differently, we want to let that happen. The way we write music is very spontaneous. We like a lot of different kinds of music, so we write that way too."

So what drives Norma Jean then, is it philosophical, musical, is it faith?

"We all love music, that's one of the main things," asserts Brandon. "And when it comes to music, it's not based on faith. Music cannot have a belief, sound doesn't have a faith, it can't be good or evil or whatever. We're a band because we care about each other and take care of each other, we're accountable to each other, and we have a consistent vision."

And that vision about an approach to making musical art is?

"That's a good question. The main thing, I think, comes down to our faith in God, and portraying that through ourselves. Not just portraying it in the way that you think you're supposed to portray it. It's about what we've been through as people, and that comes through our music. We write about those things, and we hope that God uses it, so that what we've expressed can be interpreted in a way that connects to what our listeners are going through and relate to them in that way."

Much has been made of the collaborations on *The Anti-Mother* with Chino Moreno of Deftones and Page Hamilton (you can read about them in the transcript of the interview at hmmag.com), but just the mention pushes Brandan to discuss the idea of who we associate with and why.

"That's the thing that was so good, and so amazing about Jesus," he states categorically. "It didn't matter who you were, He could relate to anybody. There's nobody who was too low, or too high, He cared about every single person. These days there are folk who are constantly evaluating the status of the people they come in contact with, 'What is their reputation, and if we're seen with them, how will it effect our reputation?' And, I'm not innocent of that. But at 32 (years young), I've come to see in the last year or so, that it really doesn't matter who I'm with if I'm really who I am. It's a very cool thing, man. But you get a lot of crap, people want to know why are you hanging out with them? Jesus said, a healed person doesn't need a doctor, and to me that's one of the best things ever."

I've always said that the problem with the Puritan ideology that holiness = separation from others/this world, is:

1) it's physically impossible unless you go off to live in a doomsday cave, and
2) Jesus – Who we claim to want to model our lives after – did just the opposite.

So, is *The Anti-Mother* a record that Brandan expects to take Norma Jean to the "next level" commercially?

"I don't know, man, we never know," Brandan laughs. "When we did *O God, The Aftermath,* we went completely crazy musically – that record is very brain heavy. It's very technical, we're chopping at our strings, and it's totally heavy, and that record just exploded. We didn't expect that, really. We just went in and tried to write the heaviest thing ever. So, we don't know what's going to happen, we can't make a prediction. What we want to happen is for people to get the record and listen to it and like it."

Backstage, sweaty and enjoying the air conditioning after a bold, energetic *Warped* set, the members of Norma Jean are light and friendly. Joking about Brandan's angry music comment (see *Warped* concert review online), before admitting that brief daily shows leave one with a lot of down time. Which, suggests they get to do a lot of self-mothering, and everyday, to start fresh.

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"...when it comes to music, it's not based on faith. Music cannot have a belief; sound doesn't have a faith, it can't be good or evil or whatever. We're a band because we care about each other and take care of each other, we're accountable to eachother,andwe have a consistent vision."

—Cory Brandan

Photo: Ralf Strathmann

The Showdo

WARRIOR SONS

BY CAREY WOMACK

Photo: Dave Hill

I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN.

An avid football fan, I had to ask David Bunton (vocals) and Eric Koruschak (bass) of The Showdown, who dwell in the shadow of the Tennessee Volunteers' Rocky Top, about their love for Big Orange football. Following a moment of trying to be courteous, Dave admitted, "None of us are really sports fans." But when I asked them about their favorite action movie ever, David immediately pounces on the question. "*Hulk Hogan: No Holds Barred.*" Eric echoed, "If I could pick the same one, I would," but then went on to mention classic action flicks like *Terminator* (the original) and *Die Hard*.

I should have known. Like a wrestler surprised by his opponent's backbreaker.

The Showdown are not sports fans; they are fight fans. Sports fans like playing *games*. The Showdown like to – well… "The record is just very 'Battle!' Very heavy metal themes," Dave tells me of their upcoming Solid State release, *Back Breaker*. With one of those nefarious you-better-watch-your-back laughs, he adds, "Like, talking about kicking some butt."

If you've seen the new cover, you get the picture. From it glares a massive, menacing warrior looking like he came from *300* or *Gladiator*, clad only in a loincloth, but bristling with a raft of arrows protruding from all over his torso. He ought to be mortally wounded, but one look warns he's coming for you, like some kind of ancient, mythic Terminator.

If you share that impression, you wouldn't be far wrong. "'Back Breaker' is the title track of the record, kind of tied into some Greek mythology theme," Dave says. Asked to describe the lyrics, he offers, "It's like *Temptation* was stories from, basically, us dudes, and *Chorus* was stories from Old Testament Bible stuff. And it's almost like telling personable experiences, but relating it, telling it, kind of tying it in with the mythology stuff."

Indeed, the CD booklet reveals every track's title preceded by a figure from mythology, functioning as a sort of advance subtitle: Hephaestus, god of fire and metal-smithing; Achilles, famed warrior of the Trojan War; Cerberus, three-headed hound of hell; Aries, god of war; and so on. They serve as befitting introductions to corresponding song titles like, "The Hammer of the Gods," "The Backbreaker," "The Hellhound Waits," and "I Am Vengeance." Intense.

And the intensity's not just about the lyrics, according to Koruschak. Asked how the new disc compares with the epic, heavy riffage and howls of *Chorus of Obliteration*, as well as the groove-happy, big chorus, Southern-boy party of *Temptation Come My Way*, Eric drawls, "I think it's definitely, I mean, it's for sure the heaviest record we've ever made. I think it's like some elements from *Chorus*, and some elements from *Temptation*, just on freakin' steroids!"

(At this point, I'm a little afraid the normally more soft-spoken Eric is going to jump through the phone at me – astride the back of Cerberus, no doubt.)

For many readers of this magazine, such promises of heaviness sound awfully familiar. Near the interview's end, David stated it another way: "Hopefully, our music makes people uncomfortable, 'cause it's so uncomfortably heavy."

The confidence brimming from the band members seems to come from two sources: preparation and comfort in the studio. The first two records were tracked with well-established producers, and parts of them were hashed out in the studio, with some of the songs never even having been played by the band before. So what was different this time?

"The only thing we really did different is we actually had all of the music and all of the vocals completely finished before we went in the studio. We spent a week or two weeks before we went in playing the songs as a whole band, with the vocals, and with the arrangements really, really close with the way they were going to be on the record," says Eric. "We'd never really done that before."

Not only was The Showdown better prepared than ever before as they entered the studio, they were much more comfortable, starting with their choice of producers for *Back Breaker*. Eschewing the big-name producers of previous projects, they went into the studio with their friend Jeremiah Scott, who engineered *Chorus* for them. "He's a really cool dude. We're on the same page with him – from the same places we do musically."

This produced a very different studio dynamic. "In the past," admits Eric, "every note that was tracked on any of our records before, every one of us were nitpicking it apart. You know, no matter what it was." David contrasts this with their new level of trust in studio, "And it's just one of those things, whenever you can just let go and not worry about what anybody else is doing, and just worry about your part, have fun, and just know everybody else's part is going to be cool. It was almost like a vacation for me."

Eric enthuses, "I think we're finally in the place we've always wanted to be with our band. I think to be able to say that, and to know that everybody else feels like that, too, is a killer accomplishment. We know that we just made the best record we've ever made, and we know that we all completely trust each other, as musicians, and live, and in the studio or whatever. And I don't think that we ever thought that we would ever really get to that place, you know?"

And how does a band get to that place? It may be that 250 dates a year will do that for you, especially staring down the rabid mainstream audiences of *Ozzfest*, or touring with rock legends like The Cult. The Showdown played these dates with a simple, unabashed integrity regarding their Christian faith, generally earning respect rather than scorn from mainstream media outlets. Eric says, "We're … Christian dudes… For us it's something personal and we really hope that people want to know about it."

Eric speaks of how last summer's experience gives context to The Showdown's impact. "For some people at *Ozzfest*, our band is nothing more than a hard rock and heavy metal band, and we're cool with that. I think for some people, The Showdown is a band that's helped them through a hard time. And for us, that's even better."

And what puts them in a position to help someone through hard times? David enlightens us, "I think just us guys fighting, sticking together, getting through all the crap we've been through, and just our band keeping it alive and not giving up. I mean, we're all fighters, everyone in our band is a fighter."

Eric interjects, "That's what heavy metal is all about."

"Yeah," says David, "I wish people could just get stoked on taking chances, and just jumping outside of what makes them comfortable."

Kind of like the lyrics of the title cut, evoking the ancient hero Odysseus:

Brothers in arms to me / Rise / and at the sound of our standing the Earth will groan / Rise / and we will break their backs through the weight of our will.

Kind of like One Who broke the back of death.

I should have known.

✖

UNDEROA

Photo: Jeff Gros

THEY'RE ONLY CHASING THEMSELVES, AND THE MARK THEY HAVE MADE...

BY ANDREW SCHWAB

THERE IS A REASON WHY THIS BAND HAS ACHIEVED WHAT IT HAS. BETWEEN DRUMMER/VOCALIST AARON GILLESPIE'S BLUDGEONING BATTERY OF BEATS AND SCREAMER/FRONTMAN SPENCER CHAMBERLIN'S ABSOLUTE SPINE-TINGLING BELTS AND WAILS, THIS SEXTET HAS LEFT A TRAIL OF BATTERED VICTIMS IN ITS WAKE FOR SEVERAL YEARS NOW.

I think it we didn't come from that tour we would not be talking right now about the new record.

You don't need me to remind you of accolades, accomplishments or reasons why they are the pinnacle of their craft. Underoath IS metalcore/screamo, even if the multitude of bands that have emulated them in their wake have become so numerous that the sound itself has become a cliché. Let's not forget the pioneers always and inevitably have followers for a reason. Let's not forget that before that glut of scene metal there was a band whose ferocity could not be matched...

And they are still doing what they do at a level of excellence that is startling.

So how can a band who has taken over the known metal universe as we know it with their previous three LPs possibly push the limits even further with their fourth? Spencer Chamberlain had some insight into Underoath's determination, motivation, and inspiration recently...

Schwab: Take a moment, a break from the tornado that is your band, and think about how much you all have accomplished over the last five years or so. You have been on the top of your game for some time now... I would even call you guys the Chicago Bulls (a la Michael Jordan era) of Metalcore. So, with this new LP, how does the reigning dynasty stay motivated? What else do you have to prove with this new record?

Spencer: (laughs) Wow, yeah, I never thought of it like that, I guess. I don't really think we go into a recording process thinking about what we have to prove or how we can stay on the wave we are riding. I really think, in all honesty, we just go in with the mindset of, 'It's gotta be something we love.' That's it. We really like to push each other and raise the bar. As a musician you can always strive to be better, so in that case, every record you make should be an album of songs you were incapable of writing two years ago.

I am hearing great things about the new material ... as in you all have explored a more "experimental" side of yourselves, adding layers of programming and spookiness a la Trent Reznor. It seems like that element would provide a third-dimension to an already potent arsenal. How did these influences creep into the new songs?

I really don't know, Trent Reznor is definitely an idol of mine, but you would more have to ask how Chris Dudley feels on this subject. He had a lot more time to work and have each of us listen to his material unlike before. I just think it kinda came along by just having more time to work on certain parts we thought we could expand on. Really thinking if a part could stand alone with just keys/programing, could we even take out real drums or guitar here… It's like I was saying earlier, trying things we wouldn't have two years ago.

You have mentioned that the lyrical content deals with your personal ups and downs during this past chapter of your life in this band. You have also mentioned that, for you at least, this is the most personal and candid you have ever been lyrically. Talk a bit about what this record means to you personally and how you have faced your battles within the context of the music. What are your favorite songs on the record and why?

Well, since I'm writing about things I'm going through first hand, the record is very personal to me; but being honest in your writing is key. It helps me (laughs) – kinda like therapy, and at the same time hopefully someone else can read it and apply to their situation in a positive way. Just writing things down sometimes helps me a great deal. As far as favorite songs on the record, it kinda changes depending on how I'm feeling that day (more laughter).

You all had a pretty widely publicized "near break-up" not too long ago. This, I am sure, is a topic you might be weary of speaking about. But, few people realize how akin to marriage band life can be. With six different sets of wants, needs, and desires, I can only imagine how challenging it must be to navigate even simple decision making. How did this tension play into the creation of the new record? How did you all resolve your "issues" and move forward?

Man, really ... I'm sure I have been asked this in just about any interview I've done in the last two years (laughs). Really, it's hard to grow up on the road. All of a sudden you look around and you aren't the same 18-year-old kids with the exact same views on life riding around in a van anymore. I think if we didn't come home from that tour, we would not be talking right now about the new record; there probably wouldn't be one. We came home and eventually swallowed our pride and accepted

it's hard to grow up on the road. All of a sudden you look around and you aren't the same 16 year-old kids with

our faults and handled the situation like grown ups, eventually. Making decisions collectively as a band is a lot easier now. We all get along really, really well.

Coming from a hardcore background, there is always an expectation on the part of the kids on how the bands they follow are supposed to sound. This can be confining, to say the least, to walk the tightrope of "scene," yet still push yourselves outside sonic confines. How important is it to you all as a band to continue to redefine your sound? In other words, do you consider the "scene" of kids that follow you when you write new material or do you just let your own artistry guide you?
We really, honestly, just want to write songs that we love, and we enjoy. It sounds selfish on the outside; but really, if you were considering all these other facts, your music would start to become kinda lop-sided. It wouldn't really be a representation of you, and more an idea of you, or what you want people to think of you. Like I said earlier, music should be as honest as you can make it, otherwise the feeling gets lost.

Talk about working with Adam D. (Killswith Engage). He obviously gets great sounds, but what does he bring to the table for you as a producer? How did his input shape this record in a way that is different from the previous?
It's hard to say. He's great with the, "Try this effect or sound here," kinda thing; or, "Let's drag this out or shorten it." But, for the most part, we are pretty much done with our record and how it's gonna go and sound when we walk in the studio doors. He's also great to work with for vocals. He knows how to push me and sometimes he throws out different ideas of a pattern or melody.

Not too long ago, you all had the chance to change record labels, but you decided to come back to Tooth & Nail. With all the other offers that were flying around out there, it couldn't have been an obvious or simple decision to make. What were the deciding factors in this decision?
Man, that one was easy, to tell you the truth. Those people are all our friends. That's the most important part for us. Also, we don't have to do what they tell us to do (laughs, then pauses to add "just kidding"). We aren't the kind of band that can handle changing things for a label or producer or anything, so they have always kind of been the perfect fit for us.

You just released a live DVD and CD, titled *Survive Kaeleidoscope*. These can be a tedious endeavor, especially in dealing with the sound element. You seemed to capture yourselves in such a way that sounded polished without being too overly manufactured. Were you happy with the end result?
From an outside perspective it sounds really solid and the look is vibrant... Yes, I was happy with it. I think it sounds and looks better than I ever thought it would, that's about as much as I can say.

I know you to be fairly prolific creatively. When you have had downtime recently from Underoath, what have been your other creative outlets?
I like to write, just about every day. Also, my buddy has a studio down the street. I've been tracking some rough ideas of things. I'm always playing music – whether it will ever be heard or not – it's always fun to record it, so you can hear it back as a full piece.

As the music industry continues to collapse upon itself, you have to feel blessed and fortunate to be in the position that you are in. How do you foresee the drastic changes that are taking place with retail, labels, etc. affecting Underoath in the months and years to come?
I really do feel blessed; but, honestly, if things continue the way they are, all the bands kids love will have to stop touring and probably go home. Without record sales, you have no label; without merchandise and ticket sales, bands can't afford to tour, and eventually they will run out of money and places to cut back on expenses to stay on the road. So yeah, at this rate the only bands left will be the crap you hear on the radio.

Random, closing, all-important question: Are any of you Bucs fans (or sports fans at all)? It is a widely held belief that "music people" aren't "sports people." But living in the middle of all the Florida athletics, you each must have some team you follow. What are your thoughts on this?
(laughs) I love hockey, but I kind of don't care too much for any other sports; but most of the guys in my band are Bucs fans, and more recently love all sports. But, yeah I don't really follow any teams religiously.

✖

(Baby's first day of school)

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Another young person received the piano "I can do all things through Christ" necklace right before a piano recital and was extremely nervous about performing. We were told by her parents that she clutched the necklace tightly and quoted the scripture over and over and prayed and God gave her the peace and confidence that she needed to walk out on that stage for her recital.

These are the kinds of stories that get us pumped up and excited about what we do! We are just a bunch of idiots trying to serve the Lord and do His will for our lives. No amount of artistic ideas, cool logos, or good product lines is going to sustain a couple of artists trying to run a jewelry and apparel company. Without the guidance of the Lord we are nothing.

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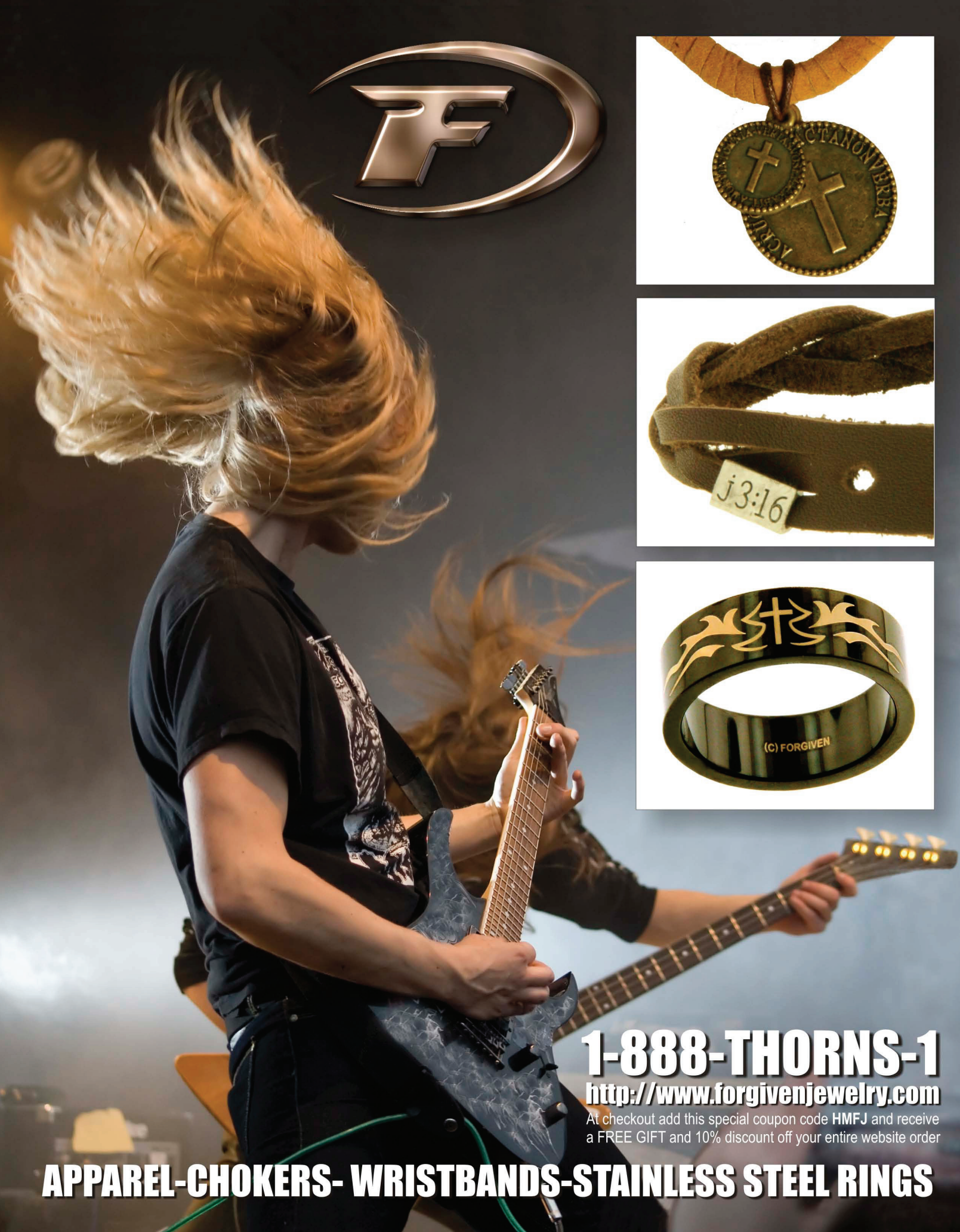

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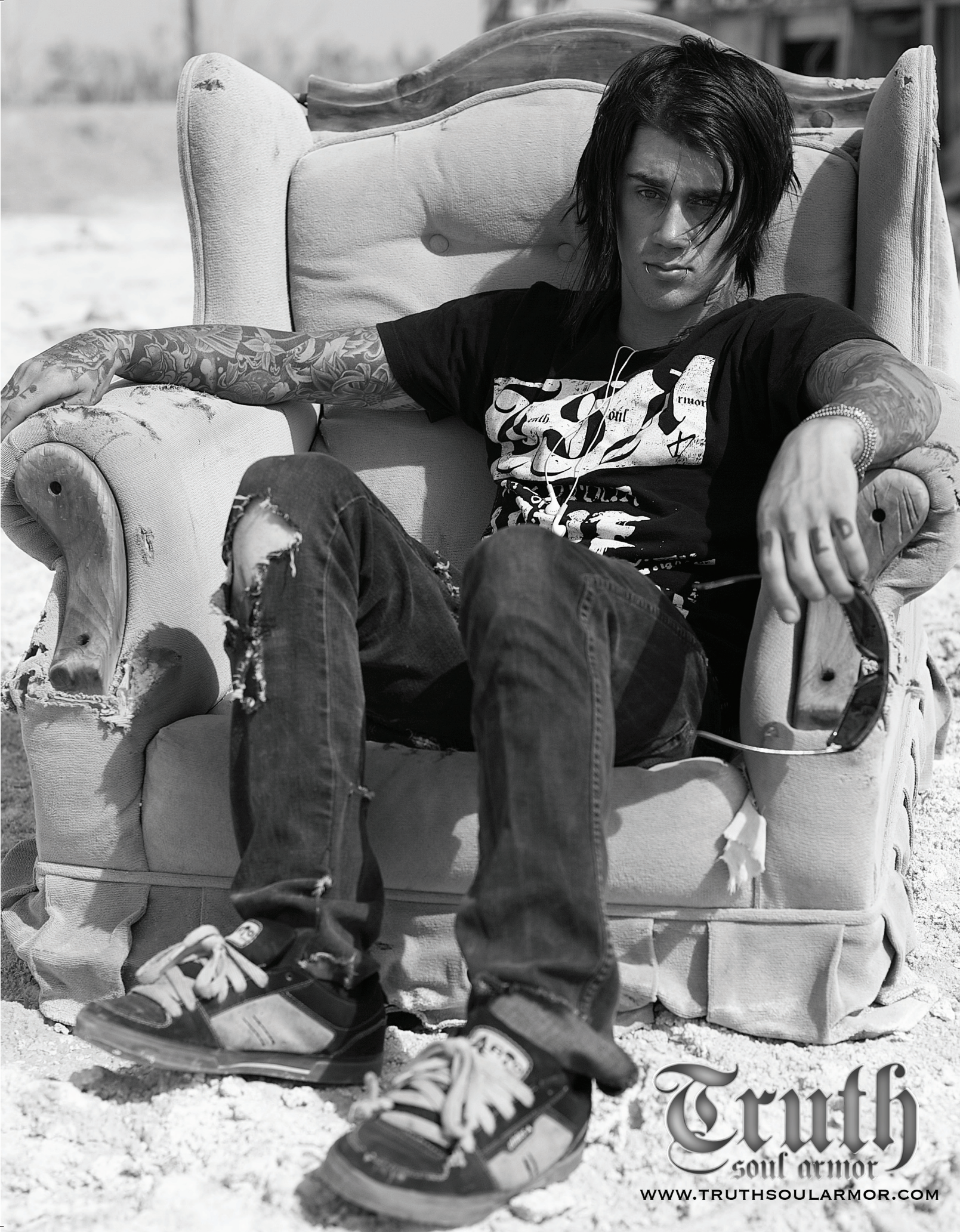
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Isaiah 1:18

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Our Name:

Every day we battle with our self on who we are going to serve. We either chose to live by the Spirit indwelling in us, or be driven by our own desires (our flesh). “Those who are under the control of the flesh cannot please God” Romans 8:8. Starve the Flesh Clothing was born out of the idea that, whatever you feed grows. So if we do not want to be controlled by the flesh, we must starve it and put our efforts instead into feeding our spirit on Jesus, the bread of life.

Our Goal:

We believe every relationship we have is for one of two reasons, encouragement or evangelism. First: to the follower of Christ, encouragement: to “Set your mind on the things above and not on the things that are on earth” Colossians 3:2. Second: to the one who has not decided to follow Christ yet, evangelism: “God did not send his Son into the world to condemn its people. He sent him to save them! No one who has faith in God's Son will be condemned. But everyone who doesn't have faith in him has already been condemned for not having faith in God's only Son” (John 3:17-18). We design our shirts with vivid graphics on the front to be conversation starters. And we place verses on the back to explain the art on the front. It is our hope that our shirts will help followers of Christ direct conversations to Encouragement or Evangelism (E2). We also are trying to live this out in our lives. If we can help encourage you or talk through questions you have, you can contact us at jeremy@starvetheflesh.com.

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Shotguns & Stereos

Give us a little background about Shotguns & Stereos: What to say, what to say…hmmm…we are a clothing line based out of the quaint, slightly ghetto, but quite picturesque city of Kamloops, British Columbia, Canada. We officially started the company in June 2008, just in time to attend Cornerstone, Illinois, but it's been in the planning stages since 2001. (Yeah, you could call me a bit of a perfectionist.) S&S is an online company, but you might see us in person at your nearest festival next year. If you do, come say hi…we need friends…no, really, we do.

> *...we need friends... no, really, we do*

Where did the idea come from to call it Shotguns and Stereos? I know its kind of aggressive sounding, but just wait, it's actually an ode to road tripping. "What?" you may be saying in a semi-confused tone with the same look that most of my friends had on their face. Well, it's about riding shotgun on the road trip of life and playing with the stereo creating your own little soundtrack. All of us are guided by some

> *...who knows, but we are all riding shotgun*

thing in our lives, mine happens to be Jesus Christ. For you it might be the same or it could be family, friends, or love…who knows, but we are all riding shotgun while that driving force takes the wheel. So, we can sit back, choose the mood, and sing along.

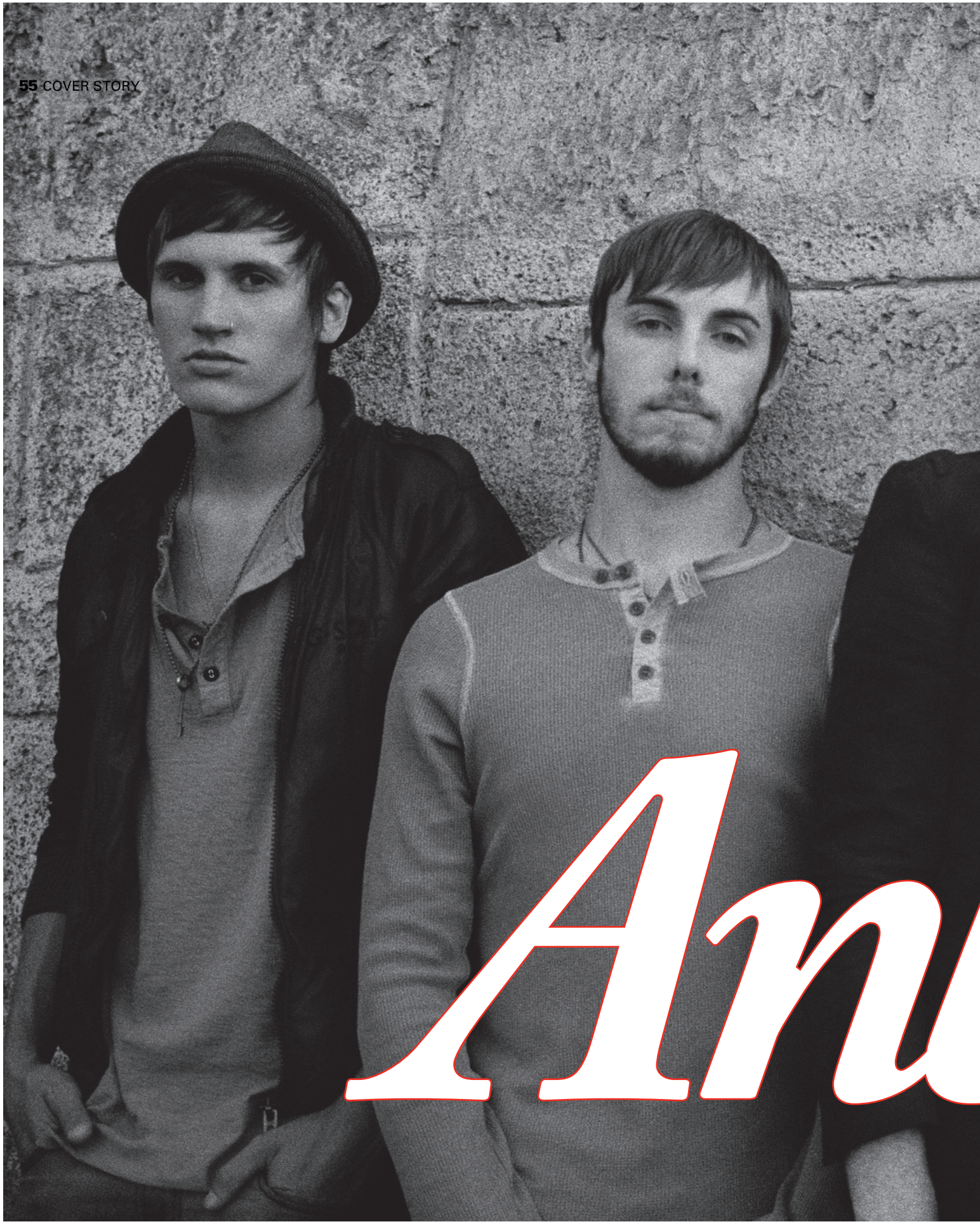
With that in mind, as a designer what are your goals through S&S? We're trying to create positive, aesthetically pleasing, in your face apparel that gets your glands salivating. That right, I want you drooling or if I could even get a slight shrug coupled with a casual hair toss and a murmured, "that's cool", I would be beside myself with giddiness! The clothing… well basically you will have a giant giraffe on your chest. What are you going to do about it? Wear it, own it, and pretend that everyone who is staring at you just thinks that you are super attractive, because you are, you know it, I know it, even the giraffe knows it. If you are looking for something that's a little bit different, but strangely intriguing, we are exactly what you are looking for, well, maybe not…but we could try to make this relationship work.

So where and how might I find myself in a relationship with S&S? You're more than welcome to come check us out online, our friend Steve Higgins over at *mediarts.ca* is working on a killer site for us, we are hoping to have it ready by the time you're reading this. Our site is *www.shotgunsandstereos.com* or you can befriend us at myspace, *myspace.com/shotgunsandstereos*

> *What are you going to do about it?*

Any thing else you'd like to add, or any last shout outs? I would like to thank my sister for keeping me sane, my friends for not being too angry about never seeing me anymore, my buddy Steve for making all this crazy computer stuff look insane, my parents for dealing with my panic attacks, all the truckers on the road who taught me how to turn on the diesel pump, . and Hawk Nelson and Kiros for being the sweetest.

-Tamara McIntosh
Shotguns & Stereos Clothing



An

BY MATT CONNER

berlin

SURPRISE . . . ROCK IS NOT EASY

Photo: James Minchin

Whatever you think is true, it's probably wrong. After all, if the band's lead vocalist and spokesman was wrong, then it's safe to assume the same for the rest of us. Luckily for the listener, the misconceptions surrounding Anberlin only lead us to great music, and in the end that's what truly matters.

400,000 albums sold. You would think that's enough to believe Stephen Christian & Co. were a hardworking rock band. But before working on their upcoming release, *New Surrender*, Christian had no idea what hard work really was.

"I've never been challenged so much," explains Christian while on his way to the first *Warped Tour* date. "I've never worked so hard. There was one song, called 'Riffy,' that I had to write 17 different choruses to, and now I hate that song. I had to work so hard and it still didn't make the record. If that's any indication of how hard [producer] Neal [Avron] made me work, *New Surrender* is by far our best. The blood, sweat and tears I had to pour into that one song and it won't ever see the light of day. That was so frustrating, but it shows how much we worked. The sense of accomplishment I felt from finishing this record was more than graduating from college. You really feel like you made it."

Quite a funny statement since Anberlin has achieved so much on their own. High profile tour mates, headline tours of their own and constant courtship from major labels have accompanied the band for some time now. And that doesn't count last year's initial *Warped Tour* dates and Top 20 Billboard debut for their last album, *Cities*.

But that's all yesterday's news, according to Christian. The switch to Universal Republic as their label home brought all new levels of artistic and commercial possibilities – one that makes Christian verbally salivate while we talk.

"Universal Republic made it so hard to say 'no.' It wasn't about money. Tooth & Nail actually offered us more money. But I think it's about the word 'yes.' It seems Universal likes to say that a lot more than some of the people that Tooth & Nail has to get approval from. They are now part of a major label, so I think they have people to report to.

"We got a chance to work with producer Neal Avron. That would have never even been remotely in the cards had we stayed on Tooth & Nail. I got to work with a lot of great songwriters and that was a new experience for me. I wrote two different songs – one with Butch Walker and one with Dan Wilson, who sang for Semisonic. Those are two things I would have never gotten a chance to do had I been on Tooth & Nail. Then there's radio and video push. The little things like the photographers – we got to go with this amazing photographer named James Minchin, who has worked with people like Linkin Park, Metallica, Ryan Adams. It's all these things that make you say, 'Wow!'"

Of course, the majors carry a level of glitz and glamour that others, such as Tooth & Nail, don't. But the members of Anberlin – Christian, guitarist Joseph Milligan, drummer Nathan Young, bassist Deon Rexroat and rhythm guitarist Christian McAlhaney – seem to realize that.

"Going on a major label now is risky," explains Christian. "This isn't a safe bet. This isn't the late '80s or early '90s where you sign to a major label and you're instantly rich and you're instantly big. Being on a major now is a huge risk. They swallow bands for fun. You have to look to others like Acceptance and Lovedrug and tons of other bands I could name who get on a major and they disappear. They're gone. But Universal is really passionate about us. Before *Cities* came out, they were begging Tooth & Nail to let them have it.

"It's all about passion, and that's one thing Universal has," he continues. "Most major labels have the money but not the passion. Universal is the first label that has constantly pursued us even before *Cities*, and their passion matched how much financially they were willing to invest. We didn't get a paycheck as soon as we signed. We didn't go out and buy new cars. I think I got some new shoes and that was about it. [Laughs] But other than that, it wasn't a huge financial blowout. It was just a great opportunity to give us a next step and pursue our dreams on a whole new level."

Of course, the exodus from Tooth & Nail wasn't as easy as it sounds, merely leaving for brighter lights and a bigger stage. As Christian explains, it was a painful process of trying to find a compromise, but simply being unable to do so.

"It was absolutely a hard decision. At first, the reason we didn't want to go to Universal was because of our connections at Tooth & Nail. We didn't want to leave. We fought to stay on there – to the point where at the end we tried so hard to do a deal with them both. But the higher-ups at Tooth & Nail – not their staff, but those high at EMI – don't like Anberlin. They think we're better on an indie label. They don't think we have that radio potential, to be blatantly honest. We love Tooth & Nail, but they're not a radio label. Not many of their artists at all get on radio. That's unfortunate, because so many of my best friends in the industry are at Tooth & Nail. They've been with us since the first day. They've always been by my side. But we just couldn't make it work; they passed and so that's what happened."

That great opportunity came with equally great levels of tension. After years of Aaron Sprinkle-d production, Neal Avron brought his own intensity and process to the studio. And the guys in Anberlin realized they had much to learn.

"We'd done all three previous records with Aaron Sprinkle, so to be honest, I was nervous," says Young with a laugh. "You get so used to doing the same thing. It's not like you do this with a bunch of different people. So, the first couple days were definitely different – having to get used to someone's work ethic and personality. It's all completely different. So, I was nervous, but as soon as we started working into the songs, right away everything was just perfect. I just knew this was the perfect dude to do this record. We all got along so well and it just

Photo: James Minchin

The sense of accomplishment I felt from finishing this record was more than graduating from college.

seemed to go really smoothly. We were on the same page, but it was cool because there were differences and that made the songs the best they could be. We fought a little with each other at first and that's how songs ended up being the best they can be."

Christian agrees. "When you're in the middle of recording it, you don't understand. He just gives you these puzzle pieces and you work on that one piece, but you can't see where it fits. So, after a while, about a month or two, I was absolutely agitated. I couldn't get the record. I didn't see how the songs fit together. You wonder what this song is even doing on the album or how it can even go on there. But now when I sit back, I can enjoy the entire puzzle and go, 'Oh, this makes sense! I get it! I get why I had to work so hard on this background harmony.'"

It's Avron's previous work that Christian says made the band willing to go through the rigors in the studio. The client list reads as impressive as anyone in today's alternative rock climate: Fall Out Boy, Linkin Park, Yellowcard, Everclear, Mae, Wallflowers, Los Lobos. And ultimately, it's that type of list that allows for trust – the ultimate currency in the studio.

"Neil Avron is a literal genius. It's not even comprehendible. Most of us are left- or right-brained. But Neal uses both sides equally. I've never met anyone like him. He majored in engineering at the University of Miami and minored in music. Instead of going off to build bridges, he decided to take on music. And he did. He's mixing Linkin Park and producing Fall Out Boy. He's just got it down. He knows the science of amazing songwriting. This is the hardest working record by far that Anberlin has ever put out. We spent three and a half weeks for *Blueprints*. Four weeks for *Friendship*. Took us four and a half weeks for *Cities*. And this one took us just under three months!"

"The consensus with friends and label people – and I'm not trying to say, 'Oh, we're all mature now' – but that's the direction that people are saying," adds Young. "It just sounds like we're older. It sounds like a fourth record. I don't know what to say without sounding cocky. It's just more timeless. We spent a lot of time on each song and each particular part. It's not as dark as our last record or even our older ones. I think it's somewhat happier – not that we were a dark band, but this one is more summery without being poppy."

Just what was the band so hard at work on? *New Surrender* is the name, and Christian insists it's the band's best songwriting to date, as well as a timely theme for everyone involved. "I'm very much into artistic interpretation," Christian explains. "I love the idea of looking at art or listening to a song and having the ability to derive your own meaning. I'd hate to take that away or say that there's only one way to look at it. But for me, I think in every person's life there's that one area that is constantly holding him back from where he could or should be – whether it's not going to college because he's not good enough. They know they should, but there's that self-doubt or persecution from others, and it holds them back. Or sometimes it's this area of life that they know they should give up, whether it's smoking or anything at all, but they know they need to surrender that thing. This whole album addresses and attacks that topic. Life has to change. It's gonna change. And whether it's for the best or worst is up to you. That's the surrender we need in life."

Anberlin is finding that hard work pays off, as the band's refined sound and message also brings a larger stage. *Warped Tour* not only asked them back, but they upgraded the package, so to speak, giving them Main Stage treatment – the life of luxury in the alt-rock world.

"Last year we were only on for three and a half weeks and we were on side stages," explains Christian. "We had to pay our dues last year. We didn't get catering. Our crew had to lug the equipment to wherever the stage was. We got placed on the back burner. Not a lot of people from *Warped Tour* knew of us, so we just tried to work our butts off and give all we could to the crowd. We wanted to make sure they felt appreciated and they knew we were lucky to be on *Warped Tour* at all."

"So here we are, a year later, and now we're on Main Stage," he continues. "*Warped Tour* asked for us to be on the cover of *Alternative Press* for their special edition. All our crew has all their gear on the truck, so they don't carry anything ever. We're just treated like kings. I think that's not only hard work, but it's also because people want to feel appreciated and we made certain they felt that. If we played the same stage this year, we would have been absolutely appreciative. *Warped Tour* is an honor and privilege to be on. We're totally looking forward to it all, and especially Main Stage."

"We're super-stoked," says Young. "We didn't know we'd be getting Main Stage, so we were really psyched when we first heard. Last year was incredible for us; we had no idea it would be that big. For this year, we're just stoked to see how kids will get into it, but we think it should be pretty awesome."

✖

Brian "Head"

HOW TO LIVE WITH A BLESSING

Shortly after announcing an intense spiritual encounter with God inspired him to leave Korn, Brian "Head" Welch learned from a record producer about orphanages besieged by a tribe of headhunters and cannibals in India. Welch prayed, asking God to reveal how He views the world and what could be done to help these children. Afterwards, Welch decided to help Good News India build an orphanage.

When the long-haired, bearded and heavily-tattooed musician got off the jet in Mumbai, India, Welch says he was blown away by the sheer number of "deathly skinny kids" on the streets. A few days later, after visiting several orphanages, Welch woke up in his hotel and felt a strong presence hovering above him. So overwhelmed by the feeling, he started weeping uncontrollably and was convinced God was calling him to help the "untouchables" – the tribes of headhunters and cannibals.

While preparing to visit the site, a pastor at one of the orphanages called, saying a tribe of "murderous cannibals" requested his help. Later that day, Welch, the pastor and record producer Steve Delaportes drove to meet the tribe. About 3,000 people, wearing loincloths over their malnourished bodies, greeted him, saying they were sick of resorting to cannibalism to survive. One of the cannibals, drunk off alcohol made from tree sap and carrying a big club with a huge hook on the end, came at them, yelling that the government also made promises to help but never did. Welch prayed, asking God to change the cannibal's heart and to take his anger away. When the drunken cannibal reached them, he paused and burst into tears on Delaportes' shoulder, saying he had five daughters and nothing to feed them.

"It was just nuts there," Welch says. "But we eventually went in, built an orphanage and the homicide rate dropped 90 percent. It was just awesome."

In the more than three years since one of the world's most unlikely rock stars dedicated his life to Jesus Christ, the 38-year-old Arizona resident has been baptized in the Jordan River, wrote a New York Times bestselling book and set up an orphanage among headhunters and cannibals.

"Welch

BY TROY ANDERSON

Now, in his debut solo album, *Save Me From Myself*, Welch tells the explosive story of his spiritual awakening and his revolutionary life since he found God: set to the same heavy, grooving music that helped his former band sell more than 30 million records. Welch hopes the album will inspire people to seek the Lord.

"I'm praying God will reveal Himself to this generation, the people I'm called to talk to," Welch says. "God is moving. He's doing a new thing and He loves the prideful, selfish rock stars just the way He loves the starving kids in India. He loves us all. And He's calling us to be His ministers. He wants us to go into the world and declare His goodness."

The album features contributions from renowned musicians such as Josh Freese (NIN), Tony Levin (Peter Gabriel, Alice Cooper, David Bowie) and Trevor Dunn (Mr. Bungle). It has retained the first part of the title of his recent book, *Save Me From Myself: How I found God, Quit Korn, Kicked Drugs and Lived to Tell My Story*. The album – which chronicles how God helped him overcome addictions to methamphetamines and alcohol, depression and a spiritual evil – is set for tentative release on Sept. 23.

"One of my favorite songs is 'Save Me From Myself,' because God saved me from my drug addiction, saved me from alcoholism, from living a lie and trusting in riches for happiness that never brought me happiness," Welch says.

Welch started writing songs for the album shortly after he shocked the music world in 2005 by announcing he had found Jesus and quit Korn.

"When He revealed Himself to me, I just felt like Paul talks about being caught up to Paradise and having visions and revelations," Welch says. "I was caught up in this euphoric place. It was so real and tangible, and I felt God's love being poured all into me. I never felt anything like that in my life. It was so real and life-changing."

Freed from his addictions, Welch was so overwhelmed by what he described as the "liquid love" poured into his soul he couldn't help but express the feeling in his music by writing mellow songs. "I was writing these soft songs, and then one day I felt the intensity come back and I got inspired to stay with heavy music," Welch says. "That intense encounter with God softened me up, and then he downloaded the dynamite back into me."

After he became a Christian, Welch says he felt God was leading him to get more tattoos as a statement of God's unconditional love for everyone. Some of the new ones include a cross next to his right eye, the words "Love" and "Jesus" on his knuckles, Philippians 4:13 ("I can do everything through him who gives me strength") on his right hand and Matthew 11:28 ("Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest") on his neck.

At first, his conversion angered many metal fans. But since the release of the book, Welch says many have come to understand why he quit Korn. His story has also helped people struggling with addictions and depression.

One of those fans is 37-year-old Doug Nadin, a burly and heavily-tattooed metalhead, who learned in 2005 about Welch's conversion. At the time, the Dawsonville, GA, heavy equipment operator ridiculed Welch, making fun of his newfound faith.

A few months later, when Korn came to Atlanta, Nadin noticed the tickets were selling at reduced prices. His curiosity piqued, Nadin logged onto Welch's Web site and watched a CNN segment showing how he helped children whose parents had been killed by headhunters and cannibals in India.

"In the old video, I saw the un-fulfillment, dissatisfaction and pretty much hatred in his eyes when he was in Korn," Nadin says. "And then, when I saw him with nothing but a Bible among the headhunters, I could see the peace in his eyes. That's what got me. I said to myself, 'That's not fake.' I didn't know anything about Jesus, but within 10 minutes I got on my hands and knees searching for a Bible in our house. I remember sitting there, thinking, 'What is in a book that could do this to a man?' My life has never been the same since."

When Welch arrived in Atlanta recently to sign copies of his book, Nadin showed up to thank him. He wanted to tell him God had delivered him from addictions to drugs and alcohol too.

"He looked like me, but meaner," Welch says. "He said, 'Brother. I went to your website and was going to make fun of you. I was saying horrible things about you, but I had a thought in my head that I needed to find out more.' His wife, his whole family, his partners and a whole bunch of people got saved. He started out mocking me, but he's like a missionary now. It's crazy."

As part of the band that became the voice of a generation with lyrics about alienation and childhood abuse, Welch says he feels called to use his talents and testimony to help lead disillusioned youth to Jesus. He says a new Jesus revolution is beginning.

"I just feel like He's waking people up spiritually," Welch says. "People wouldn't have thought years ago that God could inspire heavy music and someone to get tattoos, but God did that with me and He's awesome, like my best friend."

✖

Photo: Alonso Murillo

STILL REMAINS' LAST HURRAH

TJ Miller | Photo: Doug Van Pelt

8.21 - DETROIT, MI
8.22 - INDIANAPOLIS, IN
8.23 - CHICAGO, IL
9.7 - WEST PALM BEACH, FL
9.11 - CLEVELAND, OH
9.12 - VIRGINIA BEACH, VA
9.13 - HOLMDEL, NJ
9.14 - WASHINGTON, DC

9.18 - BIRMINGHAM, AL
9.19 - RALEIGH, NC
9.20 - ATLANTA, GA
9.21 - NASHVILLE, TN
9.25 - PHOENIX, AZ
9.26 - IRVINE, CA
9.27 - SAN DIEGO, CA
9.28 - SACRAMENTO, CA

10.2 - DALLAS, TX
10.3 - HOUSTON, TX
10.4 - SAN ANTONIO, TX
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TP. g LIVE NATION

PICK OF THE LITTER

Neocracy

Metal itself doesn't often get more metal than this. Fast, pummeling and extreme, Neocracy's new EP, *The Instinct for Conflict*, is pure, unadulterated metal at its finest. Scenester kids beware: try as you might, there are no xTRENDSx or xCORESx in sight. Breakdowns weren't written for the pit; no catchy riffs to hum to in the shower; no sing-along choruses to get the girls excited; and certainly no clean-shaven, tightly groomed, swoon-inducing frontmen. This is men's metal. We're talking hair and beards to rival the Vikings – Odin would be proud. That is if these Christians didn't beat the pagans at their own game. Death, black and thrash metal aren't generally as welcoming to Christ as Underoath-made hardcore, but when you're tougher than those opposing you, and can play your own music better than they can, you have the right to say whatever you want. Brutal and unapologetic, Neocracy leaves even the most veteran metal head on the floor. The DIY production and old school feel only adds to their credibility. These guys will kick you in the ears and leave you praising Jesus for metal, begging for more. (John McEntire)
myspace.com/neocracy

The Still Life

Our own intern, John McEntire's band makes it here (fair and square, we promise no favors!) with their very cool rock. At times The Killers; at others The Mars Volta. Creative, competent rock. Each track sounds like a different band and singer. Nice keys and album cover. (Kaela Van Pelt)
myspace.com/thestilllife

Guard Your Steps

Amazing, tight and brutal metal – with plenty of light-speed riffs and blips to go along with the screaming and growling. (DV)
myspace.com/guardyoursteps

Sailor Sequence

The serene musical waters charted by The Sailor Sequence instantly draw you in and keep you there. Slight, distorted loops and light piano guide each song toward electro-pop brilliance on their aptly titled *Seven Song* EP. Full-length is due later in 2008. (Matt Conner)
myspace.com/thesailorsequence

Theodore Ziras

Hot guitar instru-shred. Cool melodic tones amongst the noodling. (DV)
theodoreziras.com

Tree By Leaf

Cool, eclectic music with vulnerable and honest lyrics ... Fans of Secretly Canadian's roster would probably enjoy, too. Amazing. (DV)
treebyleaf.org

Timmy Curran

Killer, smart tunes – mostly straight-up, but almost quirky in an adult rock sorta way a la Don Henley. Very melodic and enjoyable. (DV)
timmycurran.com

Hello Industry

Chill and groovy indie band with just the right amount of polish. Great vocals and musicianship with a pretty direct sense of worship brings a refreshing sound to the modern Christian scene. (JM)
helloindustry.com

Amen. The Animal

Solid and catchy post-hardcore. Intricate guitars and interesting songs are complimented by a clear and clean production uncommon for an independent band. However, vocals and breakdowns seem a little weak at times. (JM)
amentheanimal.com

Shapes Stars Make

If Explosions in the Sky got a vocalist and traded a little progressiveness for catchier song structures, you would have the epic, atmospheric post-rock of Shapes Stars Make. (JM)
shapesstarsmake.com

Buxton

Strong acoustic folk with powerful lyrics in a similar vein as Conner Oberst of Bright Eyes fame, though the vocals try too hard to imitate the aforementioned artist and detract from the overall high quality sound. Buxton is part of the cool artist collective Mia Kat Empire. (JM)
buxtonband.com

missFlag

Inspired by the epic yet moody Coldplay, these guys play beautiful piano and vocally driven pop backed by atmospheric strings and emotional guitar. Despite the slow tempos, there is a subtle yet undeniable energy pulsing underneath. (JM)
missflag.com

The Christian & Art

WITH KEMPER CRABB

The Disconnect: Why Evangelicals Make Bad Art (Part the Thirteenth)

In previous installments of this series, we have explored the question of why millions of American Evangelicals have produced so little quality art (film, literature, music, architecture, dance, etc.), and have discovered that this is largely due to a limited or distorted view of the Bible's teachings, or, even worse, the unwillingness to live out and apply what is known from Scripture, all despite the fact that the Bible teaches believers how to accomplish "every good work" (2 Tim. 3: 16-17), including making art.

This lack of understanding we've seen played out in the application of shallow versions of the Biblical Doctrines of Creation and Eschatology. If the Doctrine of Creation is not understood, the material world (the arena and materiel of spirituality in history) is devalued, making art's meaning appear worth less, restricting its appointed purpose. If the Doctrine of Eschatology (what God is shaping history toward) is misunderstood, a pessimistic view of history results, and time is seen as Satan's captive, that which is only good to be escaped from, rather than redeemed.

Last issue, we began to examine the artistic implications of a faulty view of the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity, a doctrine which teaches that, though we cannot completely comprehend such a great Mystery as the Triune God, we can understand to some extent the Aspects of that Mystery revealed in His Word (Deut. 29:29), and draw logical conclusions and implications from those Revealed Aspects.

We saw that the failure of Christians to believe that God is equally both One and Three, Unified in His Essence while Diverse in His Persons, denies us the answer to the perennial question of the one and the many (of which is more primary or important, unity/singularity or diversity/plurality), a question the answer to which affects everything from art to civil governance. We turn now to a consideration of further implications of bad Trinitarian theology.

Scripture tells us that God the Triune Creator has created all things to reveal knowledge about Himself (Rom. 1: 18-21; Ps. 19: 1-4). Since the Creator-God Who created all things is Himself Three-Personed, His Creation reflects both His Unity and His Diversity (though clear discernment of tri-unity in Creation can only truly be informed through the revelatory lens of Special revelation, God's Word). This can easily be seen in a consideration of the primary way through which God reveals Himself in Creation: by means of symbols.

A symbol represents (re-presents, or presents again) that for which it stands. More accurately, symbols represent a plethora of things all at once – they have multiple meanings simultaneously (just as the Holy Trinity is One Unity with Multiple Persons, each of which Persons exhibit Unique Distinctives).

We have seen that everything reveals God, and the revelation of God is the primary symbolic purpose of all created things. However, each of these created things also symbolizes other things, as well, all at the same time. For instance, a man reveals God, yet he is also a son, and may be a husband, a father, a king, a warrior, etc., at the same time. This man's various aspects symbolize the roles which accompany the various modes of his male human existence.

Yet each of those other symbolic functional roles also reveal God at the same time they represent the aspects of that man (they are, in fact, the way in which God is revealed through the man), so that each of these symbolic representations stand for God and the man's roles, together and separately. A symbol is thus analogous in its created mode to the Triune Creator Who is both One and Many simultaneously, since the symbol also has unified and diverse meanings simultaneously.

To fail to recognize that God is equally and simultaneously One and Three, and that His Creation reflects its Maker in many ways, especially as it reveals Him, leads to the conclusion that Creation is neither a symbol in its discrete and combined parts, nor (if Creation is seen as symbolic) that the elements of the Creation carry multiple and unified meanings simultaneously.

For an artist, who depends on symbols (whether musical, visual, or verbal), the devaluation of, and/or misapprehension concerning symbols severely compromises his ability to create in complex and nuanced ways, leads the artist's audience to misunderstand his art, and generally flattens and distorts the view of the world. All this results from bad theology. Ideas have consequences, and theological ideas are no different, especially when the ideas are drawn from God's Infallible Word, our only true picture of reality.

[kempercrabb.net]

The way I see it
Chris Wighaman

"You don't have a very good testimony." He deadpanned, "like she does."

Wow. I'd always suspected that my testimony was a little lacking in drama and intrigue, but I didn't realize I actually didn't have a "good" one.

In Luke 7 you can find a story of a woman who finds out Jesus is eating at one of the local Pharisee's house. This woman had a bit of a reputation, but she managed to gain access to the house and before she knows it finds herself at the feet of Jesus weeping and kissing his feet. Her tears begin to wet his feet and she wipes them with her hair. Then in one wild moment she breaks open her perfume and begins to wipe it all over his feet. Simon, his host for dinner, thinks, "What is he doing? Doesn't he know who she is? He shouldn't be letting her come near him." Jesus responds to his thoughts with a story of two people who owe money to the bank, one fifty bucks and the other five thousand and they're both unable to pay. The banker in an act of graciousness forgives both the debts. The question is who appreciates it more? Simon is a logical man and supposes that the one with the greater debt would be more appreciative. Jesus tells him he is correct. The person who has been forgiven of much loves much, but the person who has been forgiven of a little will only love a little.

That last line that Jesus said has always bothered me.
Does that mean the guy who told me my testimony stunk was correct? Do I not love God much because I've never gone too far down the wrong path?

Let's go back to the story. What is Jesus saying here? Here was a woman who knew she was a sinner. She fully appreciated the forgiveness that Jesus had to offer her, and accepted it with humility, love and an offering of a prized possession. From what I understand about sin and humanity is we are ALL sinners. The apostle Paul calls himself the "chief of sinners." All sin is rejection of God. All sin separates us from him. All sin destroys lives.

Here was a Pharisee who didn't get it. He didn't see his sin as anything weighty. He felt his sin wasn't as bad as hers. His sin was certainly different, but no less destructive. The difference was that she knew the weight of her debt to God and Simon was a bit clueless. Jesus was right; those who realize they have been forgiven much do indeed love more.

Don't ever let anyone tell you that your testimony "isn't very good." The debt we all owe is more that any of us can pay. The beginning of really following God and loving Him wholeheartedly is feeling the full weight of your sin and the full love of one who has been forgiven.

Devotions with Austin Tucker

"To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover the prisoner was you."
–Author unknown

Recently my fiancée gave me a gift I didn't really want – a daily devotional book. I was expecting new rims for my truck, but instead she handed me a leather-bound collection of writings to help me grow deeper in the faith. Wonderful. It's not that I don't dig spiritual things. In fact, I have a pretty solid routine that includes reading from Psalms and Proverbs most every day. But it obviously meant a lot for Randi to select this book and give it to me, so I decided to include Eric Mead's *Devotions for Godly Men* as part of my daily drill.

The change-up occurred at an interesting time, because it was one of those periods when I wasn't feeling God. Oh, I knew I was saved – never really doubted that – but during that season I didn't feel saved. And on a morning when my frustration was at its highest, the devotional reading dealt with a man's need to forgive himself. As soon as I read the title I knew this was for me.

I was reminded that morning that God is always good about his part of the deal – he forgives our confessed sin just as he promised – but we still need to accept the freedom that comes with his grace. It's too easy to be discouraged by the work yet to do instead of celebrating all God has delivered us from. Even the Apostle Paul, a spiritual giant who penned much of the New Testament, admits in the seventh chapter of Romans that he still misses the mark.

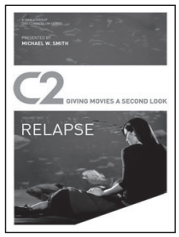
The fact is, we all fall short occasionally, finding ourselves in situations we don't want to be in, doing things we don't want to do – it's all part of being a work in progress – but we mustn't allow our harsh opinion of ourselves to overshadow the greater truth of God's great forgiveness.

If you have confessed your sin and asked God to make you new, then what he did is 100% complete. Your job is to view yourself as clean and walk as one who has been made whole by The God Who Forgives. He has wiped away the filth of your sin, and he wants you to experience the joy that comes with knowing you're forgiven.

It seems my life lessons come from the strangest places sometimes. This time it came from a leather-bound a book I didn't really want.

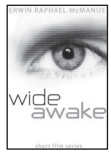
[Check out Austin and his tunes at MySpace.com/AustinTuckerMusic]

Entertainment reviews
DVDS, BOOKS & GADGETS



01 C2: VOLUMES ONE & TWO
SEABOURNE PICTURES

Going to Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship meetings while going to college taught me to think analytically, view events with a "Christian worldview" and endeavor to connect to the people around me on a level, culturally-aware playing field that invites open dialog. Michael W. Smith and the folks at Seabourne Pictures are pointing a light in a similar direction – showing that movies and art in general are a great place to engage culture and live with those around us with an understanding heart and ears. While their motivation sounds great, the finished product isn't so hot. As a discussion tool for small groups, it can certainly spark conversations about worthy topics; but as a piece of art to last for years, the first volume, *Love At First Sight*, comes up short as a story. Watching the lengthy behind-the-scenes featurettes and extras seemed superfluous at best, though gag reels are always a hoot. The second volume, *Relapse*, is darker, a tad more engaging and deeper – wrestling with addiction, grief and (gasp!) bioethics. The other-worldly realms of this story delve into the fantastic a la *The Twilight Zone*. Just imagine if you could bring a departed loved one back for a 24-hour visit... The discussion groups will love this one, and it's good enough to be a TV show that you'd want to tune in to follow along on another journey a week later with its 20-minute length/format, but unfortunately there's not a follow-up episode in sight. *Doug Van Pelt*



02 WIDE AWAKE *LIONSGATE*
These five vignettes are almost over in a blink, but they're beautiful shorts that express such depth, pain and joy. Perfect for a Sunday School class or other small group setting. One or two of them (like the flower salesman in *Beauty* or the tension in *Apartment B*) could win awards in a short films festival. *DV*

03 SEMI-PRO *NEW LINE*
In the same vein of *Talladega Nights* and *Blades of Glory*, *Semi-Pro* showcases Will Ferrell doing what he does best – being himself. The only difference this time is the scenery. If you're a Will Ferrell diehard and can handle the increased vulgarity, then this is for you; otherwise, stick with one of the others. *John McEntire*

04 THE RICHES *FOX VIDEO*
Dark comedies have been a staple of social commentary since the days of Shakespeare. Rarely, however, does one portray the depravity of humanity or extract the ugly flaws of the American Dream as effectively, or as painfully, as *The Riches*. Entertaining, smart social criticism abounds, but hopeful alternatives do not. *JM*

05 21 *COLUMBIA TRISTAR*
It starts slow and kind of boring, building character and background longer than necessary, but then gets thrilling as the life of Ben Campbell (Jim Sturgess) shifts from dull and ordinary to large Vegas-style living. The story packs a fun, surprise twist or two, and the DVD includes a digital copy of the film for multi-device playback. *DV*

06 MAN DANCIN' *VISION VIDEO*
Have you ever wanted to present the Gospel with lots of real, honest dialog that wasn't afraid to confront problems or use some "rough" language? Such is this British story of a man transformed from his previous life of gangs and violence. He meets resistance all along the way as he tries to walk the narrow. (visionvideo.com) *DV*

07 I WAS WRONG *VISION VIDEO*
There is an incredible moment in this 30-minute documentary (about 15 minutes in) where an Operation Rescue pastor retells the time when he had a conversation with Norma McCorvey ("Jane Roe"), asking her for forgiveness for something he had shouted at her. Wow. This alone is a must-hear story. (visionvideo.com) *DV*

08 VANTAGE POINT *SONY PICTURES*
The unique story-telling method of showing several different angles of the same moment here borders on the mundane at first; but it's during a car chase scene later that you realize this is an awesome movie and it has you on the edge of your seat. The background of secret service methods and terrorism is fascinating. *DV*

	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08
SPIRITUAL RELEVANCY (%)	90	100	10	55	10	100	100	60
OBSCENITIES			82	192	7	12		25
SCENES OF GORE			15	52	1			
NUDITY / SEXUALITY			30	45	3			2

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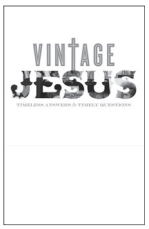
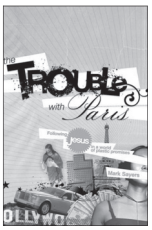


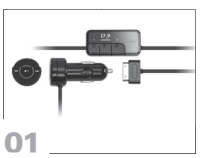
Vintage Jesus
Mark Driscoll & Gerry Breshears – Crossway

Successful founder and pastor of Mars Hill Church, Mark Driscoll, teams up with Western Seminary's Professor of Theology, Gerry Breshears, for a profound analysis of common cultural perceptions of Jesus. Easy to read and quite humorous at times, they compare the Jesus of culture against the Jesus of the New Testament, exposing many flaws, misconceptions and heresies that arise and are put forth through the media, cartoons, wishy-washy New Age tolerance, and even factions of Christianity. Thoroughly researched and theologically sound, the humor and the universal accessibility are merely the glaze on a solid academic topic handled carefully but directly with great implications for the Church and how it is perceived. Written for Christians and non-Christians alike, *Vintage Jesus* offers an entertaining, honest, and biblically guided look at Jesus, the Church, spirituality, and human failing that is both productive and informative for both. It is a charge for Christians to return to the core truths of Christianity as Jesus preached it and a call for non-Christians to search for that truth, and hold us accountable. *John McEntire*



The Trouble With Paris
Mark Sayers – Thomas Nelson

Sayers goes on a rant about our superficial tendencies in *The Trouble With Paris*, which gets its title from a young woman's experience that begins with her abandoning her job and city for a fresh new life in Paris that inevitably won't satisfy. In dissecting our ego-centric bent, he studies the hyper-consumerism we've created, which is buoyed up by our hyperreality that keeps us yearning for more. By emphasizing the trouble with our selfishness, though, the author seemingly demonizes any communication to do with "feel-goodism" at all. Reading this book alongside a contemporary like Erwin McManus (waxing eloquent about our God-given destiny or following our dreams) is like getting ping-pong slapped in the face by both sets of parents. The goal is authenticity, however, and this book fits nicely alongside a comparison of pretense and the real God (like *Vintage Jesus*) much better. Seeing Jesus as a time traveller that foretells of a time without disease (when He heals) and a time without evil (when casting out demons); and the author's explanation of the Bread of Life's cultural emphasis on bread are a couple fascinating enlargements of Scripture he eloquently shares. *Doug Van Pelt*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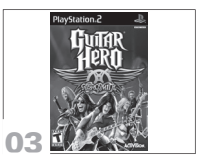

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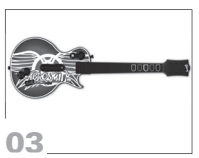
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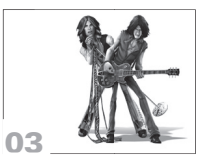
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Gadgets
Griffin, Aerielle, & Activision

(01) Taking your iPod on a roadtrip is always a great thing, and Griffin has kept improving its iTrip device for such occasions. Their latest, the **iTrip AutoPilot** ($99), features a controller on the plug that fits into the cigarette lighter socket. Now pausing or skipping tracks can be done without handling the iPod. The autoscan feature for this gadget sucks, though. On recent roadtrips, it repeatedly selected "clearer" stations that were anything but. Just like the old radio experience, the signal will get fuzzy and fade out when it's having trouble. No fun. (02) Aerielle has beat Microsoft® at its Zune® game with its handy **i2i Stream** wireless broadcast device ($99). Lightweight and rechargeable, you can share (in hi-fidelity sound) what's on your device with someone else up to 30' away. (03) Activision's ***Guitar Hero: Aerosmith*** ($49) offers a glimpse of the future, as more bands will jump in, offering their actual songs (not remakes) and a "get-to-know-the-band" vibe with videos, etc. While not known as shredders, these classic rockers did perform some fast 'n' tricky guitar parts. A great addition to the *GH* franchise, for sure. *DV*

[griffintechnology.com, i2igear.com, guitarhero.com]

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What **H.I.M.** Says

I DON'T KNOW WHY I CALL THEM "A GUILTY PLEASURE," BECAUSE IT'S NOT LIKE SCENE KIDS HATE THEM OR SOMETHING, BUT THIS BAND IS ONE OF MY FAVORITES TO LISTEN TO. MAYBE IT'S THE HALF UPSIDE-DOWN STAR / HALF HEART SYMBOL THAT THE BAND USES (THE HEARTAGRAM) OR THE RELIGIOUS LYRICAL IMAGERY TURNED ON ITS SIDE. OR MAYBE IT'S JUST THE DARK, GLOOMY SOUND ... BUT H.I.M. (RUMORED TO STAND FOR "HIS INFERNAL MAJESTY," I.E. SATAN) HAS KIND OF A REPUTATION THAT FLIRTS WITH THE HOLLYWOOD PERCEPTION OF EVIL. I GUESS THEY'RE GUILTY OF BEING EVIL. REGARDLESS OF HOW THE BAND IS BRANDED OR IMAGED, IT WAS A VERY ENJOYABLE TRANSATLANTIC PHONE CONVERSATION THAT WAS HAD WITH FRONTMAN/LYRICIST VILLE VALO.

DVP: Sex – a gift from God? Or a product of evolution? What are the ramifications of each?
VV: I don't know. I'm trying to find out. You know, I guess, it's, um ... it does have a lot of things to do with evolution, if you *do* believe in Darwinism, and, uh, I'm not quite sure about that. But either, you know, I've gone ahead... I don't believe in God so… Looks like I haven't studied Darwinism too much. Uh, gift from God – definitely not! More like a curse from the devil I guess.

(laughs)
So, uh, it's a great question. You left me speechless here.

Well, as an artist, I believe you've gone on record as listing Type O Negative and Black Sabbath as influences. Yet neither of those two bands have the kind of alternate universe or almost a complete mythology of visual and thematic impact as you guys. To what do you attribute this and what sort of thought went into this on your end?
Um, well, you know, I grew up listening to Kiss and Iron Maiden – bands like that. They always had a very strong visual aspect to what they did. Iron Maiden, well, they still have Eddie their monster, and Kiss had the make up thing going on and all the ... well, you know what they were all about back in the day; and Led Zeppelin had the four symbols, and I always considered that to be very important if you're in a rock band, as well. I wasn't consciously thinking of it while drawing down the symbol for our band – the heartogram – I was just thinking that'd be great if we would have a logo that would transcend words and, you know, nationalities, and religions, and political beliefs. It would just be just like the Nike swoosh for us. And, for example, that thing has just started to live its own life. So, it's something that's out of our hands completely. Which is very exciting, at least for me. And, about the mythology: I don't know (bleep) about any mythology. We're just five good ol' childhood friends who play in a rock band and (are) musically Sabbath-y. We were born in the way that they, you know, they came from a very rough neighborhood and they came from working class families from a little town in England. And where we come from, Helsinki, Finland, which is a tiny country – a remote one... We never thought that we would have the possibilities. There was access to Sabbath, seeing what they did, you know, proved a lot of people wrong and then gave us the hope to be able to believe that it *is* possible to succeed – even though you live behind God's back, so to speak. So musically we have a lot of influences, or at least I do. You know, somebody was asking what we were musically called. You know, it says we coined the term "love metal" ages ago. You know, a lot of people do have a problem, because metal in itself is usually very loveless. It's very macho. It's very misogynous, or at least the traditional sense of Heavy Metal is, so I just call our music nowadays Neutered Metal. So, I think that fits perfectly into what we're doing. You know, its, uh… We're just, uh... How do I put it? I guess we're metal lacking balls.

Now, to help me transcribe this later, to make sure I heard you right, did you say Nudist Metal?
No, Neutered.

Oh, Neutered Metal, Okay. Gotcha! Yeah, slightly different, but some similarities to Nudist Metal, I guess.
Nudist, yeah. Well, our bass player loves playing nude, but unfortunately there's laws against it. Especially when it comes to our bass player, there *should* be laws against it. So, he's not exciting, he's very hairy. But yeah, I don't know what sense you were talking about the mythology or the alternate world so to speak, or where HIM things happen, or whatever. I don't know what that is. I don't have a clue. Um, it's great if

there is an alternative reality, you know – that we're able to inspire, but uh, I don't have a clue what it could be. Could be since we've been living in it such a long time that we don't know.

Yeah, I didn't know how to describe it, but you certainly kinda harken back to the day of yesterday, when you had gatefold album sleeves to look at. You give the fans a lot of direction to go with their imagination and go wild with. You know, 'Who is this band? What could they be like?' You know, the symbology. It's a lot more depth than the average band that just gives you the music and maybe a live show and that's it.

Well, yeah, in that sense. You know, I said that I grew up with Iron Maiden and they're a great example of it. They have a lot of reference to H.P. Lovecraft, and they had, who was it? They use some quotes in some of their songs based on something... "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" is based on some old poet or writer, I can't remember the instance now. You know, they had a lot of references to art and to literature, stuff like that. In that sense, you know, they were influential, and they did create a new world. I think that *that's* great when bands can do that. If you get just more than a plastic box containing a plastic CD thing, you know, it's just I consider enough to be enough, and I would never consider *that* to be enough. I believe that, you know, an album should be a gateway to a certain way of thinking. You don't have to think that way, but you can still view the album and hopefully respect it.

Very nice. Well, I really enjoy your music. Um, however I saw you at an outdoor show last year in San Antonio, Texas, and, uh, pardon me, but I thought the overall sound for most of the rock songs sucked. I think the ballads really stood strong. Maybe I just caught a bad night.

Well, you know, the band is tough to play in sunlight. I (bleep) hate it, and actually the whole tour, the *Projekt Revolution* was a great educational experience for the band, since after that we decided that we're never going to play in sunlight again. We need the lighting and sort of like the hazy, dark atmosphere for the music and for ourselves to perform and all that. So, it just doesn't function very well with the ... well, I'm an ex-vampire, so I don't have any problems with the sun, physically; but uh, it just doesn't fit our band at all. And, you know, soundwise, when you're not the main act, you are limited usually to use not necessarily all the equipment, not all the PA, and the menu's different, and at times the band sucks, we're trying our best but, you know, we can't succeed at all times, unfortunately.

Yeah, I didn't see that show. I didn't want to go (to that tour), because I knew you'd probably play a 20 or 30 minute set and I'd want to see more. But I saw, maybe it was the year before. It was nighttime.

All of our songs are like 5 minutes long, or whatever, so we didn't have the opportunity of actually playing a lot of songs by us, but also at the same time it was a great way to introduce our music to a lot of people, so I can't complain on that level.

Sure. Well, the new live CD and DVD is testimony that you indeed can pull it off brilliantly live. Let me ask, how satisfied are you with your live performance as a band? Why or why not?

Um, hmm ... satisfied… Well, I'm never really satisfied. I like singing a lot, but the performance ... by the time… I like small sweaty clubs. That's where I feel comfortable. When the clubs are big, you know, it's just... I get nervous. I get the butterflies. I'm happy with the way we perform the songs and I'm really happy to be in a band with such great players of their instruments, but I prefer to sing and be there back home and writing songs. It's my cup of tea and that's where I feel maybe the most comfortable. I just get the butterflies. Traveling a lot and performing each and every night on stage is nerve wracking. It's beautiful when people really like it and it is worth it, but still it is scary.

What is blasphemy of the Holy Spirit and what do you think that means?

Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. Well, um, I guess that what that means is just, um, doing anything contrary to the Bible, I guess. And there is so many different ways of viewing the Bible that, uh, I guess that everything is blasphemous to the Holy Spirit. The only spirit I consider holy is the one that you drink in a bar. So, that's the kind of spirit I believe in. There's something tangible when you can see the results, whether they be good or bad.

If there is a God, and if the story of Jesus were true, do you think salvation is something that can be lost or discarded? Why or why not?

Um, well, what a question again. It's quite, um… Depending on what kind of salvation people want. The vengeful God of the Old Testament is very different than the benevolent person that Jesus more or less was. But, at the end of the day, Jesus got angry as well at the Pharisees and he broke the Ten Commandments. So, it's a very complicated matter, and I guess that salvation equals balance, or happiness, you know, or a state of content, you know – you can reach your life goal, or, you know, reach on your death bed or whatever. But, uh, salvation is not on the top of my priority list, let's put it that way.

What do you think of Jesus Christ?

Um, well, I didn't meet him personally, and all the texts weren't written at the very time he was living, if he indeed did exist as a living person. And, uh, I'd drink a beer with him. It's, uh, most of the things he said, you gotta remember, it was a different culture back then, as well. Different laws and different lives, and different, uh, attitudes towards, let's say, women, or whatever. The world has changed a lot since that time that was depicted in the Bible. So, uh, what do I think of Jesus? Um, depending who is kind of depicting him. So, I guess it's a tough question to answer one way or the other. A lot of people see him very differently, as a historical character or as, uh, you know, the Son of God and the very important part in the Trinity that does, if believed in, you know, get us through the pearly gates at the end of our days. So you know, if you read – I haven't read the whole Bible – if you read bits and pieces of the Bible, it does make sense a lot of stuff he says. But, uh, you know, given the people that are close to you, and the freedom to express themselves, and, uh, well the turning the other cheek is kinda gay. So, it's um, I don't know. I don't have any opinions on him. You know, you'll have to talk about a person we don't have any physical evidence of and we only have written stuff about what he said – maybe said – back in the day. You know, written by some religious lunatics, so it's impossible to say what was exaggerated and what not, and if he really said, or meant, anything written in the Bible, for example. So, I do enjoy… I want to see *Bloodline*, the new documentary about the bloodline of Christ. I love those *Indiana Jones* type of theories about the possibility of Jesus actually having a bloodline that would extend to this day. It would be great. It would be fantastic. You know, we need UFOs, and we need, you know, uh, metaphysical adventures like that to, you know, surprise ourselves at least.

I got one more religious question you've pretty much answered already, but I'll ask it anyway to see if maybe you wanted to take a different facet of what you've already addressed; but, uh, what do you think of His claims to be "the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father but by Me?"

Um, just sounds like a car salesman.

(laughs)

I guess ... more or less. You know, my way or the highway and, unfortunately, life doesn't go like that. So if it's his way or the highway, I bet I'll take the highway straight to hell and keep on listening to it to see if he is while doing that. Cause I believe in individualism, the way of educating yourself and trying to find your own way of experiencing the world and learning bits and pieces about it; how it works, rather than believing some text that already exists and take that as the truth. That's just how I see the world, you know. You know, sounds like a desperate, desperate car salesman – that's what it sounds like.

What are your biggest complaints and highest praise about the music industry and a career in music?

Um, well, it's business and I'm not a businessman, so I'm a musician. I write songs and I'm happy we are doing business in a way that we're able to support ourselves and we're able to have bread on the table, and pay our rent, or our mortgages or whatever, and I'm happy for that. But, um, at times, especially in the instant business exchange, that businessmen pretend to be artists and a lot of artists pretend to be businessmen and that's very confusing at times and I don't really believe in the possibility of doing both at the same time very well. But that's probably the reason Mick Jagger hasn't written a good song in a zillion years, even though they make a zillion bucks every year.

Ha ha. Elton John either.

Well, worthy examples, I don't know. You know, I'm not dissing those people since, you know, I love the Rolling Stones. I grew up with my parents listening to them and all that stuff, but do consider that, that there's this slight lie. You know, you can talk about money and you can talk about how you spend your own money, but I think that that's one of the problems when you have businessmen – the suits – coming up to you and telling you how to write a song. You know, I'm not going to the suits and telling them how to do business. At least not yet.

Ha ha. How would you compare life sober with life under the influence of alcohol?

Um, the only difference that I don't have so much patience while being sober, and that I have a lot more money in my bank account, since drinking is a very expensive habit; and (going) out every night drinking ridiculously large quantities of booze and hanging out, and blah, blah, blah, so it's cheaper to live sober. But, uh, also I'm more pissed off and more bored easily, and, uh, well, the big bonus is the fact that I do sleep a lot better.

I'd like you to tell us about music that you personally dig and explain why you like what you like about it, but I'd also like for you to specifically point out some artists that people that are fans of you guys might find interesting.

Oh my god! Hold on, I'll reach… let me check my iPod – what I've been listening to. There's a great band from Sweden, actually not Sweden, but from, uh, France that's not bad, actually. There's a lot of people ... but there's one DJ guy who's doing kinda experimental ... what do I call it? Like shoegazing techno type of pop. It's weird how they kinda like incorporate My Bloody Valentine with Jan Hammer, the guy who did, uh, the *Miami Vice* soundtrack for example, and French techno. The project is called M83. The letter M and then the number 83, and I just heard about them a second ago and they just released an album called *Saturdays = Youth* and they have a great song called "Skin of the Night," for example. It's really 80's. It's really moody. It's really melancholy. It's really, uh, you know ... I was born halfway through the 70's, so I grew up listening to a lot of 80's pop music and it's just – that's my cup of tea, and it brings, you know, it's very nostalgic for me to listen to some of that stuff. And, so, that's something that's very different from what we do with HIM, but it still does have some of the emotional impact – at least for me it does. And the stuff I've been listening to now ... and then, what else? Some reggae, Jah Cure – he's a great guy. He wrote a song called "Ghetto Life," but that was back in like 2001 maybe, or 2003, and, uh, that's a great reggae album. I'm a big fan of reggae, so that's what I listen to a lot. And then actually, one band I didn't like before, but for some reason I've been liking them a lot, is Disturbed from Chicago. I just consider it to be stupid, way too straight-forward, modern metal, uh, or whatever, and I guess that's basically what it is; but it's rocking my world. I've been listening to a lot of their songs recently, and it's just, that's the only rock stuff I ever listen to. Dave Draiman is a great, great singer and the band's playing tight. And the songs are just, you know, they've got the hooks. It's catchy enough for me, but still it's rhythmic and heavy enough for me and, I don't know, I'm a big fan. I was really surprised since, you know, a couple years back I didn't really think highly of them. So, uh, you know, I was proven wrong and it's been the light of my life, or the rock of my life, for a while now.

It's not often that the consumer public sees a band that re-releases its own songs as much as you guys do. What are your thoughts behind that?

What do you mean re-releasing?

Well, like the two special adaptations you did of your songs and uh…

What do you mean by that?

Uneasy Listening Volume 1 and 2

Oh, that stuff. That was, you know, uh, again, it's back to record company politics. We were signed to BMG, and, um, as they had the rights for our old catalogue – everything before *Dark Light* basically. They wanted to release something and I said, "Come on, you know, you just released a greatest hits sort of an album, you know, that would be boring. Why not go through the archives and I'll try to find, uh, since I have a lot of stuff the record company didn't... I'll find some cool mixes and beats and weave those into the songs and you can release something that hopefully'll be more interesting. Not necessarily quality-wise very good, but something more interesting and harder to find kind of stuff for the people who might be interested in different versions of songs. You know, we recorded a lot of acoustic versions of songs, recently for b-sides, and I've never been a fan of wasting good songs on b-sides, so I like remixes and I like stuff like that, because a lot of people don't buy things and then a lot of great songs, you know, they just get lost, and so I hoped with this band that we put all the good songs on the album and just create enough extra for the singles for people who really want to complete their collection of everything we've done.

What is the difference between the tragic love songs, perhaps, that you write and the forlorn lyrics of any number of emo bands?

Um, well, for starters, I don't listen to any emo stuff, so I don't really know what it's all about. So, I guess it's bigger in ... the whole emo thing is bigger in America than in Europe. I thought originally that emo started off as being emotional hardcore, so basically hardcore and not lyrically involved with politics or religion or whatever – like punky stuff, so you have a more personal touch to it, so I don't know. Is My Chemical Romance an emo band? I don't know. I liked their *Three Cheers for Revenge*, or whatever the album was, but I never actually read the lyrics. Some of my time I'm more or less, you know, I'm a big fan of Chris Isaac and big fan of, you know, Cat Stevens and more, maybe, traditional songwriters, in that sense. So, that's where I draw my inspiration from, and you know, life doesn't suck, but I consider melancholy to be a beautiful and uplifting thing. Just to change the way you're longing for something, it doesn't mean that you've lost everything. It's more like a celebration, not necessarily… It's not desperate, or depressed sadness or emotion that I'm looking for in a song. I'm looking for something wistful and pretty, and that's what ... like a beautiful sunset type of thing. That's why what's tragic, it's normal tragedy as a work, you know? It's a tough one, but uh, the wistful, beautiful, melancholy love song is for me. So, I don't know (bleep) about emo, you know, but fairly emotional ... but, you know, they have their guitar straps or guitars strapped way too high for me.

Venus Doom compared to your previous albums; and, if you can, take me briefly through each album and just comment.

Um, whoa! That's a long task. Well, you know, *Venus Doom* ... I really don't listen to the stuff we've done unless we're going to the studio to make the next record. That's the time I usually listen to – maybe not all the albums, but maybe the previous one, or whatever, you know? And the one before back-to-back and just kinda remember what we did – not necessarily wrong, but what could be done differently. And so, for me, *Venus Doom*, you know, it was a pretty tough time personally – when we were recording the album – so basically that's what I remember of the album. So I guess it takes a bit more time than just a year after the recording of the album to be able to listen to it with fresh ears and a fresh mind and go back to the mood of the album. It usually takes a couple years for me, you know, to really appreciate what we've done. So, you know, *Greatest Love Songs, Vol. 666*, that's a classic thing with a band that has been rehearsing for a long time, has made a lot of demos. You know what's funny? We didn't have a lot of songs, so we played a lot of cover tunes, and that's the reason for including "Wicked Game" and then "(Don't Fear) the Reaper" originally by the Blue Oyster Cult on the album. And that's, you know, that was the time of a life, going into the studio for the first time and just having fun. You know, we were really happy to be able to work with Hilli the Finnish Guy, who produced *Greatest Love Songs* and then *Love Metal* and then was a co-producer for *Venus Doom* as well. He really showed us the ropes in the studio and made it as comfy as possible for us. Then, with *Razorblade Romance*, it was just a long process. We started working with Hilli, stuff didn't work. We had the same songs at the time (and) at the time we also didn't have a drummer. Our first drummer departed from the band, and we just got Gas in the band, started demoing again, got a really rock vibe. You know, I met John Fryer in London, and I don't… you know, it's like playing Russian Roulette – recording an album. You never know what you're going to get. You might have a lot of ideas and a lot of visions in your head, and, you know, a lot of expectations, but at the end of the day they all keep on changing, and it's to do with the studio where you are recording, it's to do with the time of the year, the vibe of the band, and so many different variables, that, in that sense, basically music is very interesting. It's never the same. You know, if you go to the studio in January to record an album and re-record the album in March, it will sound totally different, and for no obvious reason. You know, so that's the interesting part. And *Razorblade Romance*, that was basically the album that had a song called "Join Me in Death," and that was our first really big single in Europe and that also we, got, like listed up in the top 5 in most of the European countries and it was a really weird stretch for us all of a sudden to start playing in front of thousands of people. And really, I'm happy that it happened so soon. It was nice to be the wild boy of rock and roll for a while. And then, you know, the next album was *Deep Shadows and Brilliant Highlights*. From the royalties, I got money to buy myself a proper guitar for the first time, so on *Deep Shadows and Brilliant Highlights* I missed the guitar, and listened to a lot of Johnny Cash and a lot of Neil Young. And the album's a bit smoother and it's a bit more song driven than riff driven, and a lot of people that liked us before, started hating us, since their complaint is the album was way too poppy and didn't have the same punch. And maybe it doesn't, but the album just fit the songs and it just ... that was where we were as a band at that moment. I'm not ashamed of it and I wouldn't do anything different, since it gave us the opportunity of doing the next album very differently, which was *Love Metal* – with which we kinda wanted to prove ourselves, and be artists as well, that we are a rock band, and the first song we started working on that was "Buried Alive by Love" and that's a very fast kinda straight-forward and a kinda heavy sound for our band. And, you know, that went without a hitch. We just had a great time while working on it, and you know, Hilli wasn't altogether finished producing it, then Tim Palmer mixed the album and we met Tim for the first time, and we got along so great that we went to record the next album in the States since we had recorded *Love Metal* in Finland, and went to try

"I guess that salvation equals balance, or happiness ... you can reach your life goal, or reach (it) on your death bed or whatever. But, salvation is not on the top of my priority list. Let's put it that way."

What H.I.M. Says continued on page 66

ANBERLIN

NEW SURRENDER

The dirty little secret that music snobs will never admit is that, to be truly obnoxious, you must develop musical amnesia. You are to intentionally forget the bands you once enjoyed, because you're not allowed to like them anymore, because those groups/genres are trendy, passé, and/or cliché, or simply because, as a certified musical know-it-all, the rules say that you're supposed to outgrow certain types of music. The downside is that some good music is left behind in order to avoid being mocked by the truly holier-than-thou, meaning that you might forget how good some groups actually are. So strike this reviewer as pleasantly surprised and more than a bit nostalgic when he listened to *New Surrender*, the fourth album and first major label release for Anberlin. Having been a fan of this Florida-based band's debut record (*Blueprints for Black Markets*) but not much after that, the shocker with this record is not how much the band has grown, furthered, and developed their sound (though they have certainly done so), but how much they have remained the same consistent band. Stephen Christian and the boys have a knack for crafting upbeat, catchy songs that can be instantly sung at the top of one's voice, but this time, they've upped the rock quotient by adding a new guitarist to create some substantive, dual-guitar action. While there are tracks that are a bit more formulaic than they should be, with songs like the muscular "The Resistance," the pretty "Retrace," the driving, pulsing "Disappear," and the bright, poppy "Haight St.," *New Surrender* might just prove to be a tremendous step up for a talented band like Anberlin.

[UNIVERSAL REPUBLIC] ADAM P. NEWTON

KRYSTAL MEYERS

MAKE SOME NOISE

When the editor of this mag assigned me this album review, I turned him down. In fact, I hung up on him. Made him wait a whole day before I took one of his calls. Hell if I didn't miss my calling as a woman. "I'm not interested in your pop princess," I told him. I then held the phone at arm's length as my free hand flapped in the wind like an excited and hungry chick's beak. "You're reviewing the album, dude!" he exclaimed with an air of feigned authority. I don't like being called "Dude" – especially by someone younger than I. I hung up on him again. A day or two later an advance 5-song teaser arrives with Krystal's pouting face staring at me. It makes a good Frisbee, hitting a straight-angle orbit with insert and plastic sleeve departing from the disc at different stages of the flight. I didn't think about it again until I got a follow-up call with the caller-ID blocked. Like a fool, I answer. After feeling sufficiently guilty for not reviewing the advance, I'm informed that copies of the full-length have arrived. After discovering that accepting this so-called "second chance" would not involve a lengthy trip to his forsaken farmland, I relent. I actually press play this time and start searching for some legitimate names dropped in the credits. Producer Doubledutch doesn't exactly have a past in NYC or gritty urban dance clubs in the North. The lead-off cut dopplegangers as the title track, complete with a watered down beat machine with a good amount of the edge sanded off in a rush, as if Mom and Dad were returning home from dinner early, thus stalling the mix session. "Love It Away" shifts gears by relying on more of an open chord rock approach that T-Rex or Bowie toyed with in yesterdecade. I can see why the editor made his "Shiny Toy Guns" reference in the last issue (some people actually read your rag, Van Pelt); but something is not sitting right with me. I decide to investigate in a little more organic way than twittering a night away on myspace or google pages would get me. I head over to one of a few valet parking dance clubs in the city. In a leap of faith that a receipt will cover the expense, I toss my Cadillac convertible keys over to the overweight valet boy like a scene from a movie. After passing a few dozen sets of roving eyes slightly gyrating next to the bar, sizing up all newcomers in a game of social Chutes & Ladders, I order a Red Bull® and survey the talentless hacks on the dance floor. There's only one or two real dancers out there, who don't have eyes darting sideways with every other move to make sure they're being watched.

The DJ above the floor sits on his throne, decked out with all the accoutrements of his trade, but looking as unimpressed as I. After a pretend conversation with a hurting soul, I walk over to the music booth. Seeing that he's just cued up one track ahead, I pull out the advance CD and ask him if he'd tell me if it's worth a crap. He pulls one cup of his headphones off and asks, "Which track?" Not believing in the lead-off track nor knowing the rest of the cuts well enough to answer, I bluff my way with false bravado. "Take your pick!" He loads the CD with a quickness and precision that belies his experience of repetitive motion. He looks like he could dance, but his movements describe a twenty-something that'd rather be anywhere else. His eyes narrow and he squints as if he's bothered by something. Then he begins to bob his head. "Mind if I test drive it on the dance floor?" he asks. My mind races back to my moment of test flight with the 5-song teaser and I half-wonder if he's suggesting something similar. "Go ahead," I gesture, knowing that things are going well. A few curious people have their eyes on us. After learning that this nightclub employee is working his way through a double-degree in education and philosophy, he introduces "Shine" as "something new for your ears and feet." No one moves at first, but a slender Latina ropes a frat boy by his skinny tie and drags him onto the floor for a cardiovascular tribute to rhythm. The floor quickly fills out and people even clap in time by the second chorus. Henry the DJ smiles at me with a big, toothy grin. "It looks like you've gotta hit on your hands. Who is this?" I field a few more questions from others and notice that, by the end of the night, I've got three business cards in my pocket. I leave my only un-cracked copy of *Make Some Noise* with the future educator. I burn a Marlboro outside while waiting for my boat on wheels to creak and groan its way to me, tossing the business cards in the litterbox-filled ashtray before I leave. This album quietly but confidently passed a test tonight that few can handle. I wonder what would have happened if Henry hadn't picked track #3? [ESSENTIAL] KERN COUNTY KID, THE

SEVER YOUR TIES

SAFETY IN THE SEA

When Blue Oyster Cult sang "(Don't Fear) the Reaper," no amount of cowbells could have ever prevented this track from coming off spooky. But Sever Your Ties closes its powerfully compelling *Safety In the Sea* release with a passionate cover of this FM radio staple. And instead of treating The Reaper as some harmlessly evil B-movie villain, this take frames Death like the lethal threat he truly is. At the point where vocalist Sean Marnul sings in its lyric about the thousands of suicide victims every day, he makes his case with sincere pity, not the sarcastic glee of the original. Marnul is an amazing vocalist; one who can scream and yet remain ever melodic. When he expels warnings with the opener, "Voice Like A Nova," it's hard not to heed such a call to the straight and narrow. Furthermore, *Safety In The Sea* sounds wonderful all the way through. It's got a clean, AOR rock sonic – much like Bon Jovi records, albeit without all the odes to little Jersey girls. So be sure and secure your tight connection to this band, because this won't likely be the last fine CD we hear from Sever Your Ties.

[TOOTH & NAIL] DAN MACINTOSH

Ratings

	DV	Writer
Anberlin *New Surrender*	04	03*
Krystal Meyers *Make Some Noise*	03	03*
Sever Your Ties *Safety In The Sea*	03*	03
Larry Norman *Rebel Poet, Jukebox Balladeer: The Anthology*	05	04
Aletheian *Dying Vine*	03*	04
Underoath *Survive Kaleidoscope (CD/DVD)*	04	
This Beautiful Republic *Perceptions*	03	03
Brooke Barrettsmith *S/T*	03	03
Castanets *City Of Refuge*	03	
A Different Breed Of Killer *I, Colossus*	03	03
They Sang As They Slew *The Resistance*	03	03*
Cue The Doves *Stabilizing Vitals*	03*	03*

LARRY NORMAN
REBEL POET, JUKEBOX BALLADEER: THE ANTHOLOGY

The late Larry Norman provides written commentary for the songs on this generally representative collection of his best work circa 1968-76. The impression the tunes and some of Norman's reminiscences give is that a few instances of inopportune timing and disagreements with label heads have kept him from the steady classic rock radio rotation we who have long loved the uber-Jesus hippie's artistry may believe he deserves. Whatever God's will on that seeming injustice, it's a wonder to hear Norman saluted in pristinely remastered sound by a general market indie label. Scheduled for release before his death, this collection balances Norman's evangelistic, romantic and political songwriting proclivities in a pretty masterful mix. I'd argue that it could have been made stronger by adding a couple more numbers (including the one first recalled by two friends after I told them of his passing), but as an introduction to the uninitiated, this aplty-named album will more than suffice. [ARENA ROCK RECORDING COMPANY] JAMIE LEE RAKE

ALETHEIAN
DYING VINE

Since Alex Kenis joined Becoming the Archetype, Aletheian has been quick to quell any rumors about disbanding with performances, including this year's Cornerstone, as well as a label deal and re-issue of 2005's *Dying Vine* under Metal Blade's Ironclad Recordings. Already a great album, *Dying Vine* sounds even better remixed and remastered by Westside Studios (Nile, Killswitch Engage, Between the Buried & Me). Also featuring a cover of Cynic's "How Could I" and completely new artwork, this will appeal to old fans and newcomers alike. Making the most of their new connections, Aletheian is here to stay. [IRONCLAD] JOHN MCENTIRE

UNDEROATH
SURVIVE KALEIDOSCOPE

The plan was perfect: a live album with the best cuts culled from numerous tour dates, plus a single live concert DVD from one great show (in Philadelphia). Known as a band that brings it live, these multiple up-close and panning cameras and stellar audio make the DVD a real gem and stellar visual bookmark for the band's *Chasing / Define* era. As a stand-alone live album, *Survive* is mixed superbly, capturing the high-energy dynamics between Spencer and Aaron's vocals, all the samples, audience BGVs and all the other nuances that make UO special. [SOLID STATE] DOUG VAN PELT

THIS BEAUTIFUL REPUBLIC
PERCEPTIONS

William Blake once wrote that "if the doors of perception were cleansed, everything would appear to man as it is – infinite. For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things through chinks of his cavern." And with *Perceptions*, This Beautiful Republic has done well to make its viewpoint of our infinite Creator as unobstructed as possible. Right off the bat, with the second song in, "Surrender Saved My Life," vocalist Ben Olin begs, "Keep my heart focused." And whether he's singing it sweetly, as happens during "For The Life of Me," or screaming it out, which is the way it comes off with "My God," Olin keeps these thirteen songs primarily centered on spiritual things. Stylistically, This Beautiful Republic creates a brand of rock that makes it sound like they're always on the verge of losing control, akin to riding a runaway train, due to the beat's propulsive momentum. They're at their best, however, when breaking from form, which occurs with the nicely moody "A Point Between Extremes." But all in all, This Beautiful Republic comes off looking good with *Perceptions*. [FOREFRONT] DAN MACINTOSH

BROOKE BARRETTSMITH
S/T

Take the pop sensibility of Krystal Meyers, the in-your-face lyrics of BarlowGirl, the fierceness of Fireflight and the emotive vocals of Plumb, and you have Brooke Barrettsmith. From heavier rock licks to pretty ballads, Barrettsmith proves she can sing a wide spectrum of songs with the chops of a star-in-the-making. However, it's Barrettsmith's subtle lyrical approach that sets her apart on her self-titled debut. No new ground is broken, but her songwriting efforts are solid, proving there's depth to her polished rock. Half of the record is produced by Aaron Sprinkle (Jeremy Camp, Hawk Nelson, The Almost), but don't expect Tooth & Nail rock. Barrettsmith's brand tends to lean a bit more aggressive pop, but overall, the strong lyrical substance makes up for it. Dealing with a recurring theme of fear, Barrettsmith boldly proclaims her need for a God who gives strength and courage. All 10 tracks are full of melodic rock and allow the newcomer to shine, particularly on "More Real" and "Anymore," where Brooke channels Paramore's Haley Williams. And while some of the songs could potentially get lost in the growing world of chick rock, if Barrettsmith sticks to good writing with a positive message, she's poised for future growth. [ESSENTIAL] LINDSAY WILLIAMS

CASTANETS
CITY OF REFUGE

This oddball album sounds like a dear old friend, mixing some old spirituals with new originals. The band deftly mixes those dry, hollow guitar tones found in crossover blues and indie artists with soft, whispery vocals for a roots rock yet ambient feel. [ASTHMATIC KITTY] DOUG VAN PELT

A DIFFERENT BREED OF KILLER
I, COLOSSUS

Aptly titled, A Different Breed of Killer's Rise Records debut, *I, Colossus*, is as heavy and oppressive as they come, fluctuating between mid-tempo chugs and unbridled distorted dissonance as quickly and chaotically as the stampede that killed Simba's father. The atonal low-end walks are accentuated by only the occasional melody for sonic reference before erupting with some of the fastest drumming in the business. The strength and power of the vocals is immediately apparent and is one of the high points in the record. The album is very heavy – unfortunately that's all it is. There is little variation in the feel or sound of songs, with the sole exception being the Middle Eastern chorus and major ending to the second to last song "The Glorious Fall." There is nothing wrong with being as heavy as possible, but if A Different Breed of Killer wishes to be more than a trend or novelty in the next couple years, some serious focus on songwriting as a whole is necessary. [RISE] JOHN MCENTIRE

THEY SANG AS THEY SLEW
THE RESISTANCE

Don't let their name scare you. They Sang as They Slew is much more concerned with singing than slaying. What appears, at first glance, to be another run of the mill, trendy hardcore band separates itself from the pack within the first few notes. The artists are quick to stand above modern musical stereotypes on their latest release for Northern Records, *The Resistance*, by crafting songs stylistically varying between ambient and danceable, often mixing the two for an interesting post-hardcore experience. The album is intelligently arranged with an intentional progression, but at 12 songs, it does feel a bit drawn out. It is obvious from the first few listens a great deal of thought was put into this album as a cohesive artistic expression, which is refreshing, and the thoughtfulness pays off. *The Resistance* is creative and original. They Sang as They Slew have a uniqueness that is appreciated in an over-saturated market of cookie cutter rock bands. [NORTHERN] JOHN MCENTIRE

CUE THE DOVES
STABILIZING VITALS

As far as experimental hardcore goes, these guys are at the top of their game. Frantically paced, *Stabilizing Vitals* rushes through each track, leaving the ear desperately trying to catch up and hold on to a discernable melody or pattern, often most readily supplied by melodic vocals. But even those don't stay the same for long. More than three quarters of the album's 12 tracks are under three minutes. Two strategically placed electronic interludes allows the listeners to catch their breath before Cue the Doves tosses them right back into the fray, without diffusing the band's signature nervous energy. The album sounds best after a few listens, as most experimental music does, due to a claustrophobic mix that adds to the frantic feel of the record, but makes the sounds and themes of the songs sometimes difficult to discern at first. [FEELING FAINT] JOHN MCENTIRE

SUPERCHICK

ROCK WHAT YOU GOT

It's been hard to take the made-for-Disney-TV tweener pop-rock of Superchick serious as rock and roll. But even if it's contrived, the loud 'n' brash Marilyn Mansonesque metal of the fourth track in, "Hey, Hey" is enough to make this rock dog sit up and take notice. Mixing psycho babydoll piano notes with nasty scrape-your-industrial-strength-nails-down-the-chalkboard guitar tones and a wave-of-vocals chant, it's got energy, attitude, and a big hook. I'm totally willing to grant this young band amnesty from all their previous musical sins for this one song alone. Elsewhere, they sound like Skillet ("Stand In The Rain," which features a nice "Symphonic Mix") or more similar to their previous material, albeit a tad more edgy throughout. Now, if they'll just let the taste of this sound inspire them to throw caution to the wind and embrace the "danger" of losing its 13-and-under audience and let the riffs carry them into the unknown... ~~[INPOP] DOUG VAN PELT~~

DECEMBERADIO

SATISFIED

Rock fans many times have an aversion to studio embellishments. The dirty little word for such (unnecessary?) elements is "studio sweetening." And one might make the case that DecembeRadio's new *Satisfied* is top heavy with too much un-rock stuff. For instance, female backing vocals are prominent during "Powerful Thing," "Find You Waiting," and "Satisfy Me," and there is also plenty of organ, piano and horns throughout, which sometimes gang up to slightly obscure Eric Miker's Southern rock guitar attack. Another valid view, however, is that just a touch of sugar makes that cup of coffee oh-so much better. And in this light, DecembeRadio's *Satisfied* contains quality songs where an extended cast only enhances it, without hiding its inner goodness. For instance, "Gasoline" pauses for a children's choir and a moment of *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* horns for no foreseeable reason. But the track's monster, semi-surf guitar groove is just too darn strong to let a few little added things get in the way of its overall pleasure rush. Sure, you may get a tad distracted at times, but *Satisfied* will appeal to your sweet tooth and your physical need for meat and potatoes rock nutrition – both at the same time. ~~[SLANTED] DAN MACINTOSH~~

NEAL MORSE

SOLA SCRIPTURA AND BEYOND (DVD)

If you like progressive rock (Yes, Rush, Genesis, Pink Floyd, Dream Theater, The Mars Volta), or if you just appreciate incredible musicianship of any kind, then you need to check out Mr. Morse. A long time veteran of the prog rock scene, Neal has most recently put out several Christ-centered recordings that take center stage on this two-DVD live set. The first disc features a concert filmed in 2007 at a large club in the Netherlands (all the musicians are from there, except Neal). Opening with the massive epic "The Creation," all the signs of the genre are there – keyboard and guitar solos, rapid dynamic changes, and emotional, soundtrack-like moods. After 20 minutes (that's one song, by the way!), the six-piece band treats the crowd to a few Spock's Beard tunes (one of Neal's old bands). Then comes a big chunk from the *Sola Scriptura* CD, a work about the life of Martin Luther that features some incredible shredding by axeman Paul Bielatowicz. Next up is a mammoth medley from *The Question Mark* album. For an encore there's a (10-song!) medley from the *Testimony* CD, and then for fun some Transatlantic (former band) tunes. So endeth disc one. The running time for both is almost six hours! If you have a craving for musician's music, this is your fix. The bonus material includes behind-the-scenes of the tour, an acoustic tune and 9 tracks from the 2006 tour filmed in Berlin. To be a Neal Morse fan you have to work at it. There is no radio play; most record stores – Christian and secular – do not carry his stuff. However, if you live in Europe, the distribution is good. For Americans, though, Google and Pay Pal are your friend. Neal is very upfront about his love for Jesus. Through his music he desperately wants the listener to worship God. It certainly had that effect on me. ~~[RADIANT/METALBLADE] PAUL Q-PEK~~

F5

THE RECKONING

For those not familiar with David Ellefson's (ex-Megadeth bassist) latest endeavors, you might be surprised to know about F5. The Arizona quintet – which just also so happens to feature drummer Jimmy DeGrasso (ex-Megadeth and Suicidal Tendencies) – released their debut, *A Drug For All Seasons,* in 2005 to mixed reviews. Metal purists looking for another incarnation of Megadeth were obviously overly critical, while those more open to the modern metal milieu were generally pretty fired up. With their second release, they continue in the same Disturbed-meets-Sevendust vibe, but they have stepped up the quality a notch: sweet guitar leads/solos blend nicely with the heavy riffs/rhythms, while Dale Steele sings out – with clarity and arena rock conviction – about tough personal trials. Even though they are treading in familiar waters with this music, I admire them for putting their own powerful (yes, even old-school metal) stamp on radio-ready metal ... the kind of stuff that sounds really good cranked to 11 … especially while driving! ~~[OARFIN] JONATHAN SWANK~~

RELIENT K

THE BIRD AND THE BEE SIDES EP

After setting the bar so high with last year's *Five Score*, this little band from Ohio has proven that it's no little pop punk novelty act. "Deathbed" is so awesome ... wow. While most b-sides are proverbial throw-aways, songs like "At Least We Made It This Far," "Beaming" and "The Lining Is Silver" show off a sturdy voice in Matt Thiessen, and smart, snappy instrumentation, which should qualify Relient K as a virtual songwriting machine. Most of the 26 songs(!) are presented with clear production (not getting goofy until the end), making this collection far above average. ~~[GOTEE] DOUG VAN PELT~~

FAMILY FORCE 5

DANCE OR DIE EP

Their previous longplayer was a ton of fun (even if you bought it again in its deluxe edition?), but, if this extended player is any indication, Family Force 5 have so fulfilled one of their probably implicit musical directives from the get-go. Whereas before their grooves were optimal for headbanging and slamming, FF5's now all the way dancefloor vetted. Titular track implements '80s stutter edits and a yearning r&b/disco ambience. "Fever" could be taken as their industrial/dance-oriented rock homage to Wax Trax! Records' heyday. "Wake Up The Dead" mashes up nu-metal and crunky pop into mirror ball goodness. Lyrics are about as much about their Lord as just having a good time in Him. They realize that they've set a stratospherically high standard for their next full album, right? ~~[GOTEE] JAMIE LEE RAKE~~

Ratings

	DV	Writer
Superchick *Rock What You Got*	03	
Decemberadio *Satisfied*	03	03
Neal Morse *Sola Scriptura And Beyond* (DVD)	03*	04
F5 *The Reckoning*	03	03
Relient K *The Bird And The Bee Sides* EP	03*	
Family Force 5 *Dance Or Die* EP	03*	04

What H.I.M. Says | *cont'd*

a different studio in a different place. And we just went over to California to record *Dark Light*. And rented this big mansion. It was weird, it was weird, but beautiful at the same time. And we recorded a bunch of songs and that worked out really well. Then I started drinking way too much and got depressed and, uh, wrote the songs for *Venus Doom*. That's about it – for now. You know, there's a million stories behind each and every album, and I can remember most of them, but it would be five hours per album if I start talking about all the details.

True. Well, what, if anything, has creeped you out in terms of fan devotion or audience behavior?
Creeped me out? Well, you know, people will be more or less, or fairly respectful towards our band. We've never had a lot of crazies or whatever you want to call them, so… Once there was a girl, that was a lot – like 8 or 7 – years back, attacked me with a pair of scissors and cut a piece of my hair out as I was just sitting there on the patio in the bar, and drinking a beer and talking (bleep) with Migé, the bass player, about bands, and that was scary. That was weird and creepy. She attacked me from behind and cut a piece of my hair out. I don't know why, and she was crying and laughing hysterically, and she was completely not right in the head. Uh, that was the freakiest thing so far; but, more or less, you know, it's a whole lot of weird people with a lot of weird opinions, but we're really happy to have those people come to our gigs and, you know, hopefully attempt meeting with some of those people and talking about the weird opinions and the weird looks and all that. I think that that's a positive thing.

I'm curious if you've ever taken a hard look at poverty and what your thoughts are on the difference between the wealth and poverty in the world today.
Poverty, in general… [the] poverty situation is weird, since… by our travel, we… I live in a country where all the, you know, the healthcare is very good. I guess it's a lot better than in the UK. I don't know. The health care, for example, is pretty good in Canada, isn't it?

That's what I hear.
So, yeah, there's a lot of… the education is fairly good. It's a very safe country. There's not a lot of crime, not a lot of violence about… So, in that sense… and not a lot of, like, true poverty. There are poor people, obviously, but the whole system works pretty well in the way that they are able to help people, provide them with apartments and try to get them out of the dulls and try to get them to work, so it's obviously very different from the situation as it is in some of the states in America, and then in some of the other countries, like Russia, for example. We're just a few hundred miles away from Moscow or St. Petersburg … and it's crazy to see that either you're really poor or you're super rich. There seems to be no middle ground in there, or at least I haven't seen it. And that seems to be one kind of development in certain countries, that either you're born with a silver spoon in your mouth or then you actually live in the gutter. And, you know, it's… How to handle poverty – that's an age-old question. It's a good question to be pondering upon, but the way I think of that is hopefully I can enrich some people's lives – whether they are financially secure or not – with these songs. Maybe it gives their lives something, something extra, something they're lacking. So, that's my personal stance on the thing, but it's a tough question. I'm from a family that was working class, and we weren't super rich, or rich by any standards. We did get an education as it is free for everybody. If you're paying taxes, you get education, so in that sense, you know, Finland's very safe and secure as a country. So I haven't been living outside of Finland extensively enough to actually see first-hand what true poverty can be. You know, I've never been to Africa. I've never really had the chance to visit some of the places in South America. And, you know, so I haven't seen a lot of it. What about yourself?

I just got back from Uganda in February.
Whoa! How was that?

It was very eye opening. You know, I got to sit, touch, and feel poverty up close. I was sitting on dirt floors where families of 6 children slept in a four foot by five foot floor. Uh, it was heavy.
Wow, it must be. It must be weird, crazy and beautiful at the same time. You know, just to see… get a bit of perspective?

Yeah.
I've never been to India or Africa or any of those places where extreme poverty does happen. Well, maybe to Russia, but, you know, I want to go once, or one day. I want to see that, and hopefully do something about it as well, but I'm not sure myself I'm strong enough. You know, that's where I'm probably going to (bleep) break down immediately.

Yeah, which isn't a bad thing. Yeah, that would probably happen. People kept asking me, "Is this your first trip to a third-world country?" and I said, "No, actually I went to St. Petersburg, Russia, and that's kind of like a third world country, because it's so destitute in many ways."
You know what it is, yes… St. Petersburg is beautiful. They have a lot of history there and it's visually beautiful. It's a stunning city. If you go to Russia one day, check out Moscow, because it's very gray. It doesn't have beautiful, historical … like the big arts museum they had in St. Petersburg, they didn't have that kind of stuff. It's really rigid and gray and feels kind of jaded. I have friends in Moscow, so it's not that all the people will be bad or anything like that, but the private city is very rough.

Well, next week I'm supposed to have the privilege of interviewing Peter Steele of Type O Negative face-to-face. Is there anything you'd like me to ask him or tell him?
Wow, I hope he's doing good… I haven't seen… I've shook hands with him. Um, not necessarily a question. I'd love to sit down with him and get to know him one day. You know, it'd be a great honor, because he's one of my idols – one of few, let's say, new idols. You know, as I'm an admirer of Sabbath and Maiden and all those bands I grew up with, but Type O… They were a really, really big inspiration when we formed HIM and for me personally before, because they were one of the few bands incorporating a lot of cynicism, a lot of irony, and a lot of the dark humor into the usually overly serious world of metal music, and they had the pop kind of sensibility to their music as well. So with it, easily you get, you know, singing and shouts, and then again, you know, after coming out of the shout, dry your hair by headbanging to it. So, it was a great combination of those things, so in a way we're trying to do the same with HIM, but, you know, if you talk with him, just say thanks for me… to lead us on the right path, and sorry for ripping them off in places for our personal gain.

Well, keep up the good work, man.
Yeah, we'll try our best.

Alright.
...and hopefully we get to meet next time around and talk about Uganda.

That would be great. Alright, I'll stay in touch through the publicist.
Cool, no worries man.

✖

ADVERTISEMENT

AWAIT THE DAY

Photograph by Justin Trapp

BY JAMES HARRINGTON

Houston, Texas-based hard rock outfit Await The Day have just released their 5-song debut EP *Time For Change*, with lyrics that focus largely on trusting God's providence – something to which the band has grown accustomed over the course of their 18 months together. What started as a thrown-together worship band for a church men's retreat in November of 2006 has grown into a full-blown musical ministry for the quartet. Says Eddie Boyer, the group's bassist, "We keep saying we're just along for the ride. I don't think any of us intended things to go this way, but God keeps bringing the opportunities and we keep saying yes."

It's hard to argue a point like that with a band that has rarely had to expend much of its own effort to book a show. "Most of our gigs come to us through our MySpace," says guitarist Justin O'Neal. They've played bars and Christian music clubs, church youth events and battles of the bands, and they've shared a stage with Showbread and High Flight Society, all with minimal (non-musical) effort on their parts.

In fact, their most exciting opportunities somehow seem to fall in their collective lap, sometimes in dizzying bursts. Boyer was at a Houston sandwich shop when he met Jeffrey Armstreet (Evangeline), who produced the band's EP at his studio, and subsequently got them placed on the bill for one of GMA Week's biggest showcases. Soon after, the first song they recorded with Armstreet got them placed on the independent stage at Spirit West Coast in Monterrey, California. After all of that, the band could be forgiven for suspecting an external hand may be manipulating knobs on the myriad doors that continue to open for them.

Despite the consistent growth of their fan base, their busy schedule, and a solid first recording effort, Await the Day insists that their aspirations aren't centered around large-scale success, at least not for its own sake. "Our goal is just to glorify God through our music and to be able to minister to people, especially young people. That's where our passion is," confesses O'Neal. "We'd love to play on a mainstream stage and be a big band … but that's not really our goal." Adds Boyer, "We want to make God famous, not us… We want to make the best music possible that captures the heart of a generation for God."

Capturing the heart of a fickle generation seems like a tall order, and I wonder how they hope to do it. "Christians need some good ol' hard rock music that can speak to them, encourage them, and that they can relate to in times when life just sucks," says lead singer Ben Fontenot, who wrote all of the songs on the EP. "On the other hand, I think the mainstream needs to know that … there is music out there that offers hope and love and something they can relate to. If we can somehow be a vessel to lead them to Christ through this kind of music, then God is truly glorified and we are doing our job."

It's a charge they take seriously, and to which they devote no small amount of prayer and discussion. To be sure, music-as-ministy can be a difficult line to walk, but the band is unfazed. To keep him grounded, Fontenot looks to the words of another lyricist [Switchfoot's] Jon Foreman. One particular Switchfoot lyric ("I don't belong here.") has helped galvanize his purpose and the band's in his mind. "We're here to make a difference, but we're not here to stay," he says. We'll see.

awaittheday.com

making God famous

TAKE IT BACK!

BY DAVID STAGG

It's got to be hard to be a lead singer and get sick. I'd imagine whatever handlers that may be would take extreme precautions to make sure you didn't catch a cold. Vocalist Zack McKim seems to handle it alright. I doubt there are any handlers around, but McKim's doing a good job regulating himself. "Right now, we don't have any shows, so I'll be alright," he says, voice so raspy he's sounding a lot like Steve-O. "To be honest, I deal with allergies every year, and it's just something I have to work through. I take certain precautions; sometimes I don't get to do all the fun things all my buddies do. You won't see me running around wet after jumping in a lake with wet hair."

By the time you read this, though, Take It Back! (consisting of McKim, guitarists Andy Brammer and Daniel Hawkins, drummer Josh Huskey, and bassist Nick Thomas) will be out touring again, and if the allergies continue, I can only imagine the sickness might actually help the band's sound. McKim, a former smoker for about eight or nine years, now sports a naturally raspy voice, and the sickness might just make the vocals sound, well, sick. In fact, in his opinion, it's probably helped the band define their sound. "I had just come to a point where there are all these bands with voices that all almost sound the same," he says. "I just wanted to do me. As far as vocally goes, I wanted to do something that was a really good representation of our live show."

Take It Back! recently released their first full-length record, *Can't Fight Robots*. Now touring to support it, it seems Take It Back! invests a lot into their live show. The band – all Christians – are faced with the timeless dilemma most Christian bands face: How much do you say from on stage? The band has taken the stance that they are ministry-focused (in fact, McKim left another band to join Take It Back! because they were ministry-focused), and owe a lot of that to the ones that came before them. "For me, I grew up watching old Zao and old Hopesfall, Spirit-filled hardcore bands," he says, "and those experiences were very inspirational. The thing that is different about us – I am stoked on what's going on in the world, but we have the worship aspect in a lot of our songs, and a lot of our lyrics lean to that kind of stuff. We also have dark side to what we do – yes that comes out sometimes. But we want to lead Christians into worship. But for people that aren't Christians, we want to show them what it's all about."

The record has an old-school throwback sound (think Stretch Arm Strong), it's got the chants, and it's got a good flow. Lyrically, McKim wanted to stress the importance of love in relation to God and mankind. "I told a lady the other day the songs that were written on the record were written on my heart before they were ever written," he says. "God was impressing on my heart the importance of love and worship and stuff like that. The songs that aren't directly to God are about Him, or conversations I've had with Him."

But more than anything else, McKim wanted to stress the fact that they love to have fun, just have a good time. The band started off as kind of a joke band that took off, and they carry the good times with them to this day, no matter what the nature of the song is. "(People) hold a lot of stuff in," McKim says like he's starting a manifesto. "Someone hurts us and we build up a wall or hold it in. By doing that, all it does is cause bitterness, pain, jadedness. It can hurt them as much as it can hurt us. And it sucks that there's so much crap like that going on in the world today. Things could always be worse, and we have a God that loves us. That's why we love to have fun when we play."

[Photo: Brian Meredith]

myspace.com/takeitbackar

Happenin' days are here again

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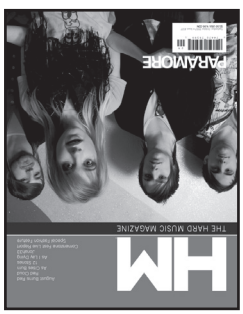

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#131
P.O.D. & Showbread

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PARTIAL LIST OF AVAILABLE BACK ISSUES:

#088 Mar/Apr '01 **Zao**, Luti-Kriss, **The Brothers Martin** (yes!), The Alarm, FSF
#091 Sep/Oct '01 **P.O.D.**, **Dashboard Confessional**, DA, One 21, Embodyment
#098 Nov/Dec '02 **Blindside**, Dream Theater Says, **Embodyment**, Lost Dogs
#104 Nov/Dec '03 **The Ugly Truth Behind C. Rock**, J. Cash, BRMC, **Thursday Says**
#108 Jul/Aug '04 **Demon Hunter**, Antestor, **Zao**, Cool Hand Luke, Boys Night Out Says
#110 Nov/Dec '04 So&So Says Special, In Flames, **Lamb of God**, Throwdown, **Slipknot**
#111 Jan/Feb '05 **Comeback Kid**, Showbread, Anberlin, **Taking Back Sunday Says**
#112 Mar/Apr '05 **Norma Jean**, Extol, Starflyer 59, **Eisley**, Far-Less, Scorpions Says
#113 May/Jun '05 **As I Lay Dying**, Still Remains, **Mae**, Copeland, **Fall Out Boy Says**
#115 Sep/Oct '05 **Blindside**, Mortal Treason, John Davis, **Project 86**, The Locust Says
#116 Nov/Dec '05 **No Innocent Victim**, Demon Hunter, **My Chemical Romance Says**
#117 Jan/Mar '06 **P.O.D.**, Zao, **Maylene**..., Underoath poster, **Sevendust** Says
#118 Mar/Apr '06 **Thrice**, The Classic Crime, The Violet Burning, **Collective Soul Says**
#119 May/Jun '06 **Underoath**, Project 86, Danielson, **Bleeding Through Says**
#121 Sep/Oct '06 **Norma Jean**, Showbread, **mewithoutYou**, Buckcherry Says
#125 May/Jun '07 **The Chariot**, BTA, **Virgin Black**, Skinny Puppy Says, **Chevelle**
#128 Nov/Dec '07 **Demon Hunter**, Emery, **TDWP**, Chris Cornell Says, Spoken
#129 Jan/Feb '08 **Thrice**, Pillar poster, **Korn Says**, Inked In Blood, A Plea for Purging

THE WEDDING

BY DAN MACINTOSH

Some groups spend a huge chunk of their careers living down badly chosen names. Can you even imagine how hard it must be for Toad The Wet Sprocket to be taken seriously? Yet for every oddball moniker foolishly wasted on otherwise good music, there is a group with a naturally great name. Take The Wedding, for instance. This group's name/biblical allegory beautifully conjures up the end-time image of Christ (The Groom) returning for The Church (The Bride). "That's like the conclusion of the world of sorts, so it's kind of like an honor," gushes guitarist Trevor Sarver. Such satisfaction can never be associated with wet sprocket toads, whatever those are.

The lineup for this sonic ceremony was just recently finalized because singer Matt Shelton fronted Letter Kills before getting hitched, so to speak, with The Wedding. Approximately three years prior, Shelton had married and settled down in Texas, and was happily divorced – so to speak – from the whole rock & roll road life. Or so he thought, because just less than a year ago, Sarver (to continue using marital lingo) proposed to Shelton. "[He] started pursuing me as [The Wedding's] new singer," Shelton relates. "Initially, I said, 'No.' But he kinda didn't want to give up. He just kept calling me for the past six months or so, and I just kept saying, 'No.' I'd been off the road for about three years, so it takes a lot to uproot yourself again – especially being married. I didn't know if I wanted to jump into a band that had been pre-existing and had had some success before me, because you have a lot of shoes to fill. A lot of people like the original lead singer, things like that." Sarver started the conversation. Then God had the final say. "'God just said, 'Why can't you go?'" Shelton recalls. "'You've been praying for Me to give you an opportunity to get back out there in front of kids and this was that opportunity.'"

While blindfolded, you can casually throw a rock in any direction and likely hit a Christian band at *Warped Tour* this year; Christians have so infiltrated the mainstream music business. Yet it's hard to find many new rock bands sincerely focused on ministry. In stark contrast, however, The Wedding is one group that is not ashamed of its Christian mission.

"Ministry is a huge part of our lives," Shelton explains, "so being in a band – that's just going to be a natural out-pour of it. Ministry is our life. We do not exist outside of God's reality and what God intends to do, so we just get onboard with that."

And when Shelton speaks about getting onboard, that phraseology goes right along with the group's latest EP, *The Sound the Steel.* Its artwork features a cool old steam train chugging along the tracks. "The opening line of our EP, in the very first song, 'Receive' – which is also in a Johnny Cash song – is 'I can hear a train a-comin.' And basically, in that reference I refer to God as this powerful train. I believe that God is a powerful train that is constantly moving forward. He's got His track laid down, as far as what He's going to do. And all we can do is get onboard with what He's already doing. The train is a reference to God and His power and His will. The title, *The Sound the Steel,* is (also) a reference to that. I believe that we are the sound that the steel makes as the train is moving. When God moves among us as believers, we are that physical sound that people can see and hear and touch and feel."

So to quote the great Johnny Cash once again, "Come along and ride this train," because The Wedding is onboard and going places.

[Photo: Neil Visel]

myspace.com/thewedding

Why can't you go?

HARDNEWS
Page seventy–nine

Photograph by Jimmy A.

77s

BY DOUG VAN PELT

"This is how Elvis did it."

Mike Roe is stoked about the 77s' latest album, *Holy Ghost Building*. "It got its start from our drummer, Bruce Spencer. He's been on the road with (Americana buzz artist) Jackie Greene, and I think Bruce was trying to find a way to get us back into the studio again. He suggested: 'Why don't you go and find a bunch of old gospel songs and we'll record those our own way. Just forget about writing songs, let's just do some old, classic stuff – whatever you wanna do.' So, I went and did a bunch of research and I found all these great gospel blues songs and stuff like that. It was a real education for me. I'd heard a lot of this stuff over the years, but I really submersed myself in it this time.

"I put together a cassette with as many of these songs as I thought would be good to do, and we set up the band live in a large warehouse studio downtown. We had two different sets of drums, depending on what the vibe was, so that we could all play live. I'd put on the cassette and say, 'Alright, check this song out.' The minute we heard one we liked, we'd say, 'Alright. Got it,' and we'd go sit down and just record it in one go. We'd keep doing a few takes until we felt like we got it, and then we'd move on.

"So, the concept of recording live on the fly with songs that we either barely knew or had never heard before ... this was something that really appealed to me, because I love working that way. If I were in comedy or acting, I would be in improv theater and doing it like that, because that's where I really work best. And, this also is the same way that Elvis Presley recorded his material in the 50s. Either he or the producer would bring in a stack of singles that had been submitted by songwriters or they were old songs that Elvis knew. They'd say, 'Let's do this,' and they'd work it up on the fly and record it and that would be the record. It would go out just like that. So, for me, it was like coming full circle – not only with our band, but just in the whole approach to record making in rock and roll and everything."

The timing just might be perfect for such a recording; what, with Robert Plant and Allison Krause currently wowing audience after audience with old gospel standards in a stripped-down and raw format (how could it *not* be raw with T Bone Burnett directing traffic?) that some critics are calling the tour of the decade. According to Randy Elrod's *Ethos* blog, Plant is introducing tunes with comments about the origin of a song coming, "as many of our great songs have come – from the church."

Perhaps the injustice of the 77s' self-titled Island Records debut going unnoticed will somehow be overturned with this gem of a collection getting noticed. Now, wouldn't *that* be something?

News bullets

A Skylit Drive have announced that they will be filming three music videos in three days – "This Isn't The End," "I'm Not A Thief, I'm A Treasure Hunter" and "Knights Of The Round." They will be addressing the topic of depression and suicide prevention in the video for "This Isn't The End," which they are making in association with non-profit group, To Write Love On Her Arms.

On the July 7th day off between shows, several *Warped Tour* artists, crew members and tour sponsors aided in the rebuilding of some post-Katrina small Gulf Coast communities.

After a motorcycle accident left him with head trauma that included permanent hearing and vision loss, **Barry Blaze** has returned with two new albums – *Lost In Egypt* (under the moniker of his band, **Code Of Ethics**) and a solo album called *Patiently Waiting*.

Facedown Records is proud to announce the signing of **Call To Preserve**, who released a full-length on Facedown's Strike First sub-label. The new album is being recorded at The Outpost in Stoughton, MA, with Engineer Jim Siegel (Dropkick Murphys, Death Threat).

Tooth and Nail Records artist **Secret & Whisper** has just announced their addition to the Loud Park Festival in Tokyo, Japan, labeled the heaviest metal festival in Japan. The festival will be held October 18th and 19th and will feature Slipknot, Dragonforce, Carcass, Apocalyptica, Obituary, Meshuggah, and more. Singer **Charles Furney** said about going to Japan, "It has always been one of my dreams to go to Japan playing in a band. So it's really cool to have this opportunity so early in Secret & Whisper's career."

Guerilla Tactics is the follow up to **The Alarm**'s emotive 2006 album, *Under Attack*, which underpinned lead singer **Mike Peters**' battle and subsequent victory from Leukemia (CLL). This most daring of Alarm albums features an urgent collection of up-tempo new wave songs underscored by high velocity guitars, rocka beats and occasional space echo dub. Lyrically driven by lead singer Mike Peters' amazing journey back to health,

Snake Bit Photo

Agraceful

BY JOHN McENTIRE

Shortly after his departure from Rise Record's up-and-coming emo rock band Emarosa, vocalist Chris Roetter teamed up with members from fellow label-mates Here I Come Falling to explore both a heavier musical direction and a more direct presentation of their passionate spirituality through a new musical endeavor known as Agraceful. In a MySpace blog entry, Roetter directly explains his new band's direction: "It's nice to be a part of music that has meaning, because in the end that's all I've wanted to do. I want to make music to spread the word of Jesus Christ, and that's exactly what this is. Agraceful is spreading the Word, one person at a time," and ends the entry quoting Matthew 15:13:

> *"Every plant that my Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots."*

Giving no hesitation to playing the most aggressive material its members can muster, melded with just the right amount of melody, the band provides the perfect outlet for Roetter's honest lyrics and powerful vocals.

Not content to rely on the nice, neat, comfortable Christian subculture that has arisen in the metalcore trend, Agraceful sent a demo to Sumerian Records, a label best known for its particularly brutal breed of death metal. In their own words, both the label's owner and manager were floored by what they heard. Upon signing Agraceful, Sumerian manager Shawn Keith said, "It is very rare that now-a-days you can come across a band that gives you the chills. When I first heard the demos on the band's MySpace, I could not believe what I was hearing. There is something special about Agraceful, and it is something that is timeless."

What Agraceful lacks in the brutality and technicality perfected by The Faceless and Born of Osiris, with whom they share a label, they more than make up for with sheer passion and drive. Combining the hardcore styling of Underoath with more extreme metal influences (heavy breakdowns, death growls), the band seems ready to explode onto the scene with a fervor and earnest message that will be quickly noticed. True to Sumerian Records' reputation, the recording and production quality is top notch, pushing Agraceful's sound to the next level. Set to release their debut entitled *The Great I Am* on August 19th, Roetter and company chose the right label to partner with for their new direction.

Guerilla Tactics was mixed by Gilby Clarke (Guns 'N Roses) and will challenge your perception of The Alarm forever. It will be the first release by the band that won't be sold as an import. The CD will be available everywhere at current US rates and as a special added bonus it will contain a DVD element that will include a video for every song on the album.

Letter to the Exiles will release their debut Harvest Earth Records release on August 12th. The EP is entitled *A Call To Arms* and the band will be on tour later this summer in support of this release.

Paramore has announced details of a very special performance at Rumsey Playfield in New York City's famed Central Park on August 28th.

Living Sacrifice has released two brand new songs exclusively online: "Death Machine" and "The Battle." These are the band's first new songs since 2002 and are available on the band's MySpace page through Bandbox. The band's best of set, *In Memoriam*, was released in 2005 with three songs that were thought to be the group's last. "We're super excited to be able to put out some new stuff for people to hear. This is our newest material in more than five years!" says vocalist / guitarist and founding member **Bruce Fitzhugh**. Fitzhugh is joined in the reunited Living Sacrifice by founding member / drummer **Lance Garvin** (Soul Embraced) as well as lead guitarist **Rocky Gray** (Soul Embraced, ex-Evanescence) and bass player **Arthur Green**. "This tour has been more then we could hope for; it's awesome to see this band playing to some younger fans for the very first time," says Bruce.

Seventh Star is taking a page out of Christian alt-rock history (see Grammatrain) by playing its last two shows ever ... in Europe. Germany's Freakstock and Total Armageddon Fest in the Ukraine. "It's pretty crazy to think that the last time Seventh Star will play will be in Ukraine."

Harvest Earth Records are pleased to announce the official signing of Indianapolis, Indiana's own **The Goodnight Horizon**.

HM

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COVER PHOTOS **Jeff Gros** Pg 1
James Minchin Pg 88

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SCRIPTURE "Woe to you Pharisees, because you give God a tenth ... but you neglect justice and the love of God ... Woe to you, because you are like unmarked graves, which men walk over without knowing it." (Luke 11:42, 44)

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Letters to the Edit

Iron Fist Shirts Rule!

Hey there, today I got a shirt from Iron Fist in the mail. Just wanted to say thank you! I'm now a big fan of Iron Fist, and an even bigger fan (if possible) of HM. Here's a picture of me with some of the stuff I've gotten from you guys.
–Rachel Schilling, via internet

Ed – See? People really do win at HM.

Pizza And HM Go Together

Hey Doug and HM family... Just thought I'd run this story by you. I'm an associate pastor at a church in a North Dallas suburb. Last week we were having vacation Bible school and one of our volunteers came into my office saying that there was a guy outside wanting to talk to a pastor. So I went outside to meet the guy and invited him into my office. He told me he needed some help with gas for his car. He worked as a pizza deliverer and had a few days before he would get paid again. I guess it's sort of hard to deliver his orders without gas in his car. Second, he told me he wanted to change some of the music he's been listening to. He was a believer, but the music he listened to didn't reflect his beliefs. He wanted to change his music library; problem was he didn't have a lot of money to be spending on CDs. I told him I think I can help. In my desk I had some HM sampler CDs I thought he'd like, so I gave them to him. I also had one of my HM magazines that I gave him. He looked very surprised that I (a pastor) would have such a stash. He said, "I guess you were just the person I needed to talk to." I was glad to help. We went and filled his car up with gas, and he was off to work listening to his new tunes – I'm hoping. Thanks for all you guys do. Your work made a difference in one guy's life last week. Take care.
–Shawn Lutgen, via internet

Ed – That's so awesome.

(Bleep) and (bleep)

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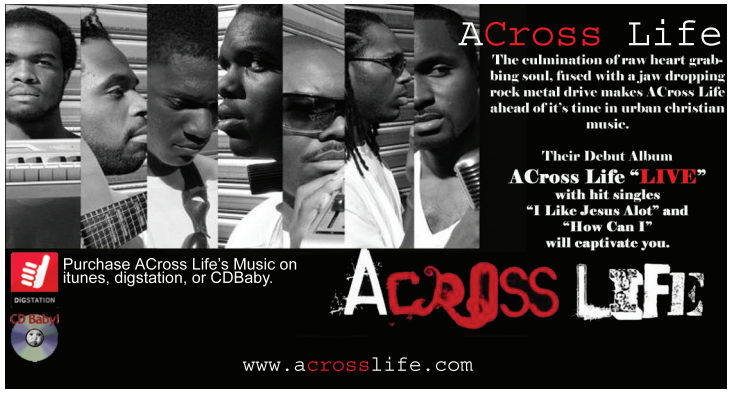
–Gabriel Gatica, via internet

Ed – By any chance, are you a pizza deliverer?

Experimental Failure?

I just finished reading the "The Christian Rock Experiment" [issue # 131] and I must admit that it left me feeling upset. Although I was excited to see Mark Salomon involved, his narrow perspective on art was quite disheartening. I will admit that both perspectives were an interesting read, but instead of "speaking for themselves" as you may have hoped they would, I'm afraid that they may have caused increased confusion on the ongoing subject of "Christian vs. secular" art. Salomon's appreciation for Norman doesn't outweigh the fact that he has no idea that believers are making some of the best "outside the box" art right now (i.e. Edison Glass, Aaron Sprinkle, The New Frontiers, Aaron Marsh, Jon Foreman, Aaron Weiss, Stephen Christian, Aaron Gillespie, etc.). And based on what you've written in the past about how music should "stand or fall based on the quality," I'm surprised that you let such . . . distaste go to print. Worse than Salomon's half-hearted attempt to expose himself to modern music, and his disastrous effort at explaining music / faith, was the bad theology that came from Denlinger. In the vein of many believers who do not understand that true disciples of Jesus are missionaries, with a mandate to enter into culture, and go as far as they can without sinning, the same way that Jesus did, T.D. regurgitated what I call "fortress theology" – it's a doctrine of demons, although cunning enough to appear pious. These Christians teach that staying "saved" means to disengage from greater culture, homeschool your children, buy only music with a fish on it, and wait on the rapture. Jesus did not teach this. Jesus did not set up shop, expecting people to just come in. He went out, and commanded us to do the same. Now, I apologize, as I'm sure that I'm preaching to the choir. I just believe that we have a responsibility to correct bad theology when it creeps into the Church ... and even our magazine articles. Very respectfully,
–Jason Slajchert, via internet

Ed – Instead of stepping in and so-called "correcting" anything one of my writers writes (yuck – who'd write for me again if I did that?); I'd much rather say: "Let the discussion begin!" That's why we have the hmforums.com.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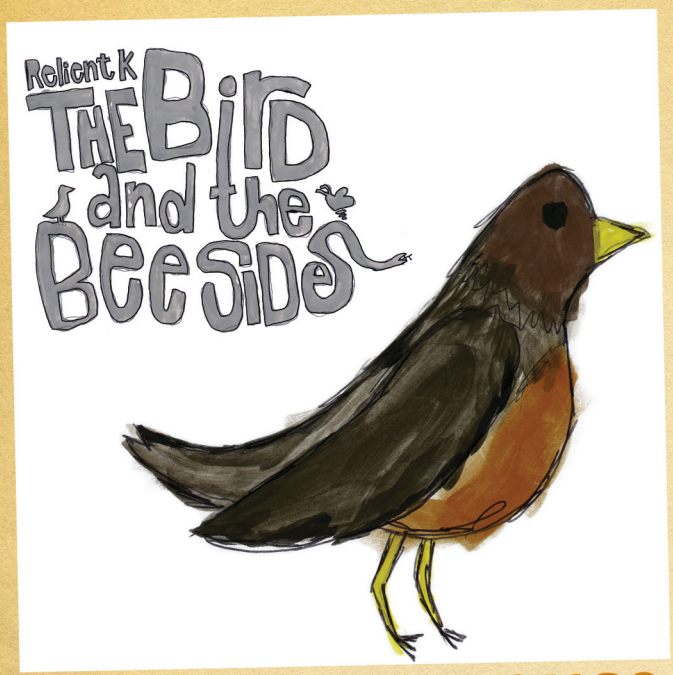

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